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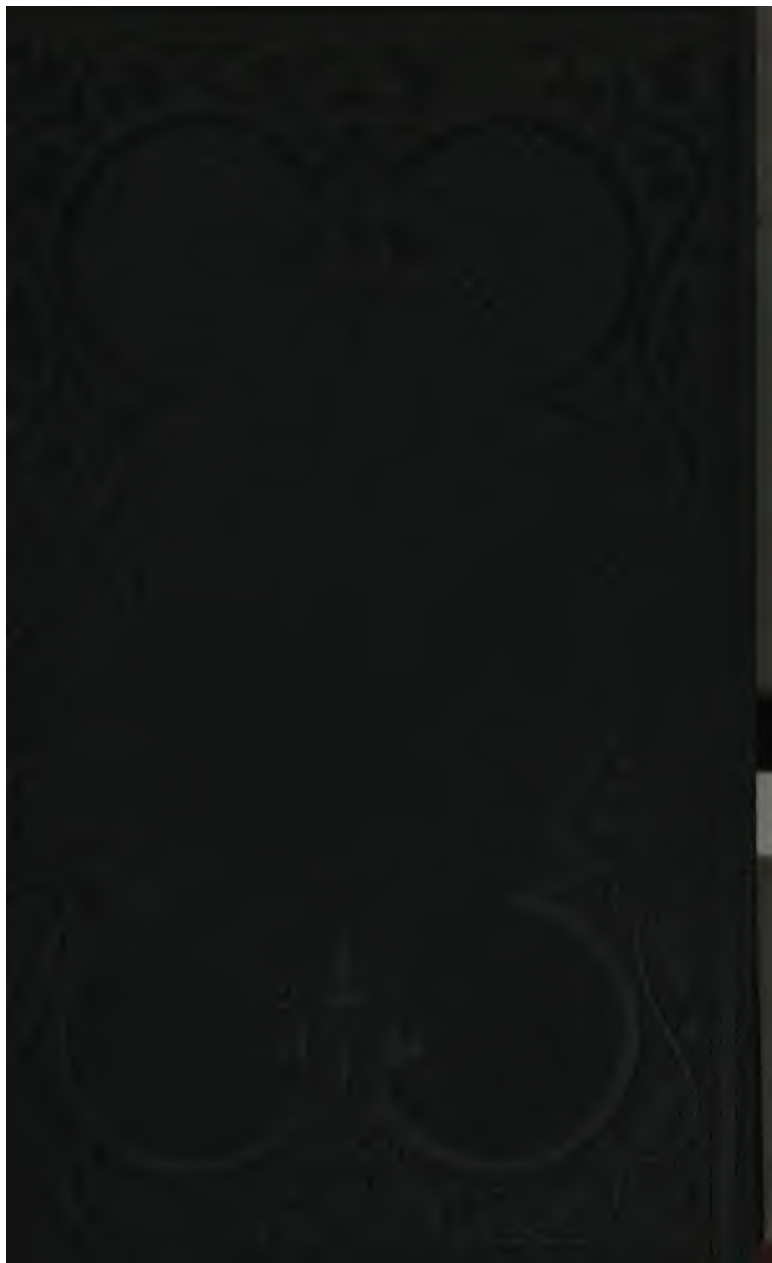
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AFTER MANY DAYS.

A TALE OF

SOCIAL REFORM.

BY

SENECA SMITH.

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MDCCCLX.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE undertaken a narrative of human weakness in temptation, of fearful falls from virtue, and of ultimate redemption. To many it will occur, that themes so sombre should be handled with funeral sadness, and to such my indulgence in the comic vein may appear a violation of good taste—if nothing more. But I prefer to invest my characters and incidents with the motley which is the common wear of human life—that strange yet universal garb in which the mournful and the gay, the tragic and the grotesque, so constantly intermingle.

After much consideration, I have concluded that it would be unprofitable, and even unfair, to disguise the purport of the tale ; and, therefore, I make free to commence at a stage which is really very far in advance of the main incidents of the tale. The reader will find himself at once surrounded by characters and circumstances which he will not thoroughly understand till he has come to the closing pages of the book.

The considerations which have determined the precise characters and careers of the *dramatis personæ*, are too numerous when taken together, and too insignificant sepa-

rately, to admit of either full or partial exhibition in a preface.

It may be enough to remind the reader, that the majority of young men are not heroes nor geniuses, but exceedingly weak and conceited creatures—ever beset with temptations, which often prove too strong for the wise, the beautiful, and brave ; and which, while they serve to blight the beautiful, to cripple the brave, and to befool the wise, inflict ignominious ruin on the weak.

NOTE.

This Tale was written five years ago, and it is now given to the public without alteration, except in one particular. It became necessary to shorten the narrative. In an artistic point of view this abridging process has been done very awkwardly ; for it leaves a considerable amount of matter in the volume which has but slight apparent connexion with the narrative. On the other hand, the author less regrets the awkwardness which nearly isolates the Introductory Book, as it enables him to offer a description of certain scenes which, so far as he is aware, have never been worked up into any fiction.

LONDON, 1860.

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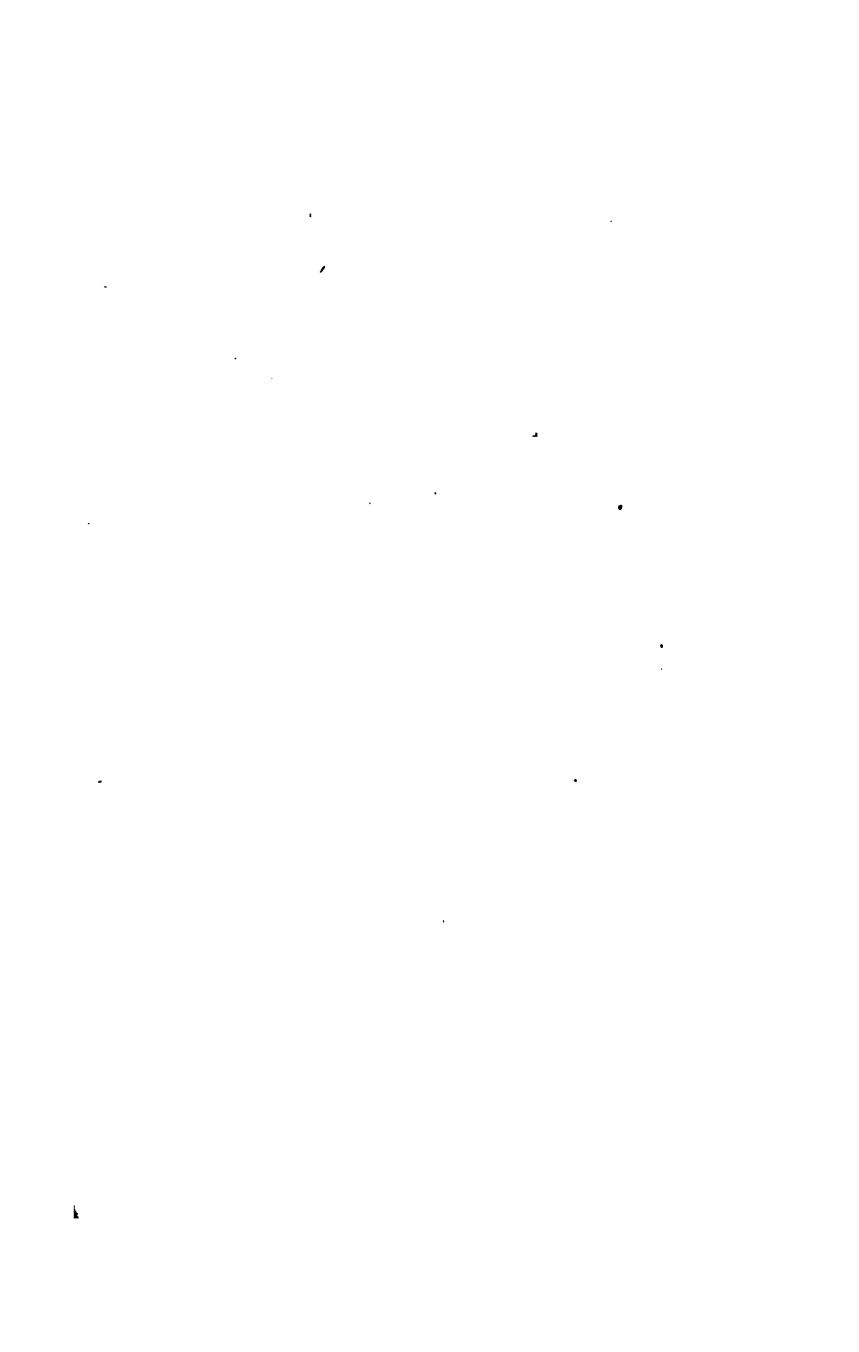
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AFTER MANY DAYS.

THE GALA DAY.

Part First.—Out of Doors.

CHAPTER I.

THE COURT-HOUSE.

THE Arlton Court-house was an old building, and its age was the solitary claim it possessed to the affectionate admiration of genuine Arltonians. A very careful scrutiny, by an artist of great experience, had resulted in pronouncing it to be akin to the Gothic order of architecture in its original form ; and the date of its erection was loosely fixed at “any period which History might show to have been remarkably deficient in artistic skill, and at the same time powerfully addicted to the use of purple bricks.”

Some years before the date of our story, a considerable change had been effected in the West, or High Street aspect of the mouldy edifice, and the change came about in this wise. The magnates of the town, smitten with compunction when they contrasted this mean temple of Justice with their own stately little palaces of stone, and at the same time resolved on retaining the only piece of antiquity of which they could boast, contrived a graceful compromise, by which their consciences might be relieved without detriment to their truly noble conservatism in matters of taste. The plan adopted may be described as follows—the main body was to be new fronted with an imposing façade, along which there should be inserted six Doric pilasters (“well masticated,” the worthy

proposer said), then a good bold porch in the middle, with two Doric pillars, as thick as possible, and of real stone. Since the change, a casual observer was almost sure to be overwhelmed with the magnificence of the structure, until he received the rather spiteful explanation of his guide, that "it looked a vast sight better than it was ;" whereas, in the old times, honest Arltonians would exultantly apologise for its external meanness by assuring their friends on a visit, that it was a vast sight better than it looked. The commercial prosperity indicated by this improvement in the front elevation of the Court-house had continued with occasional drawbacks ; but the time had not yet arrived for pulling the old part down, and making the building uniform. Indeed, the philosophic spirits of the town had very early, perhaps prematurely, accepted and acted upon the opinion of their first literary authority, "that there is a point beyond which it is not desirable to carry civilisation, and when that point is reached, it is the duty of all men to spread it over as large a space as possible, instead of pursuing the process of refinement any further." The Arltonians, then, consented to regard the new front as quite civilisation enough to do any real good, and in accordance with the maxim of their oracle they had thenceforward addressed their energies and superfluous cash to the pleasing, but difficult task, of bringing the rest of the town up to the Court-house standard.

CHAPTER II.

THE YARD.

THE court-yard was spacious enough for all communal gatherings, whether for business or pleasure. There stood the hustings, when an appeal to the country was going on ; and here, too, stood the crowd of the great unrepresented, to maintain their poor share of popular privilege and to discharge their solitary political duty—that of asking impertinent questions, and then drowning with deafening roars the equally

impertinent answers. There, also, twice in a twelvemonth the fun of the Fair was collected as in a focus. The beasts of "the forest primeval;" the ugly dwarfs full to the scalp of malice, and the milky-faced giant who could not and dare not injure a fly; the African bruisers: the great-headed baby: the acorn-prompted pig: the celebrated conjurer from the Indies who swore "by the Powers" and appeared to thrive not amiss by the favour of those same powers; the wax-works better and truer than life; the Theatre Royal with a new five-act tragedy every quarter of an hour, and above all and among all—the strains that invite to revelry and cost only voluntary coppers.

Here, every Monday in the year, might be seen the huge prison-van drawn up very close to the iron gate in the corner—hearse-like, horseless—a solemn warning to all who passed by; and *vis-a-vis*, like Puss in the Corner, was the gorgeous gold-coloured barouche of my lord—an affecting and very palpable illustration of the blessings to be picked up in the course of a virtuous life. In truth, that yard was well worth a visit from all who devote themselves to the study of character, any day of the year, with the exception, say, of about 300; and on those exceptional days, to tell the truth, the yard could furnish no subjects for profitable reflection beyond a few melancholy, ownerless, degraded dogs, and some scores of idle quarrelsome cocks and hens.

In this court-yard were enacted the scenes with which the tale opens, whilst the scenes supply not only the turning point, but also an epitome and miniature of the two lives which furnish the materials of this book.

CHAPTER III.

A GENERAL HOLIDAY.

THE town was up betimes on this glorious autumn morning, and the life which manifested itself at an unusual hour in the shopkeeping streets, must have been anticipated by the humbler children of toil in back streets, and in the

villages for miles round. The programme of the day's festivity included a procession, a gala in the People's Park, and a tea-party that promised unprecedented glory. The procession was to start at ten o'clock ; and, accordingly, from the hour of six, A. M., there was a constant stream of townsfolk into the yard, and of country cousins into the town. Every vehicle known to man had been put into requisition by the visitors from without, and all styles of costume ever attempted by the leaders of rural fashion must surely have been represented in the medley crowd which occupied the quadrangle. The first comers enjoyed their time-honoured advantage of escaping criticism either of their equipage or their dress ; but, with a playful contempt for the small generousities of life, they flung the shafts of ridicule right and left, without either discrimination or fear of retort. Peals of laughter every now and then directed curious eyes to some new feature in the scene, but very rarely to any fact or person droll enough to account for the merriment.

One incident, however, was just comical enough to justify the wild guffawing of the crowd, and out of respect to the general sedateness of neighbours, it will be well to record the event as a justifying plea. Groggy Muggins, a thriving bone-crusher, was excessively fat, and Mrs. Muggins was much fatter. Economical in the matter of horseflesh, Mr. M. had decided to commit his own person to the carrying powers of his dumpy, wicked little pony instead of to a milk cart which was drawn by a bigger but leaner horse. It is not wholly improbable that the desire his spouse had expressed about "having a day out," influenced him in the selection of his conveyance. But if he thought such a saucy trick would baffle any woman in the world, much more such a woman as his wife, he had lived thirty years in nuptial bondage to very little purpose. She cheerfully agreed to put up with the inconvenience of a pillion, trusting for consolation to her secret intentions of revenge on the road. They travelled ten dusty miles in sulks ; but, happily, without falling out in any sense. Their goal, "The Bull Pup," was nearly in sight, and with resigned minds, the pony and his riders were devouring their several breakfasts by anticipation,

heedless of intervening perils. Slowly descending the incline opposite the court-house gates, "the three fat 'uns," as boys upon the railings impudently called them, came to sudden grief. The stones were a trifle greasy, the burdens a trifle heavy, and the secret purposes of the matron were so far fulfilled that Groggy was, as he said, "riding uncommonly forrards—astraddle the shoulder-bone;" so that when the weary brute slipped, it had no alternative but to sneeze, plunge headlong, and break its knees. The saddle-girth, and the various strappings involved in the pillion contrivance, snapped all at once. What particular angle Mrs. M. described in her descent, it boots not to inquire; but tradition saith, that, on her way to that recumbent position in which she long lay panting, observers had an unexpected opportunity of contrasting Dives and Lazarus in one and the same individual,—splendid purple, of the silkiest texture, and in redundant folds; but where consistency demanded fine linen, alas! the best that could be said had better not be said.

A crowd knows no mercy, and always prosecutes false pretensions with the utmost rigour; nor was there any exception now. So far as the jolly unbruised bone-crusher was concerned, this instinct of the crowd mattered very little. He had long ago buried his sensitive nature very deep beneath his cow-skin waistcoat, and for many years had been heaping on its tomb layers of impenetrable fat. He rather enjoyed the thing than not, so long as he was only shaken a bit. But with his better and larger half, the case was widely different. She had, with a girlish glee, pinned her pride upon her purple sleeve—a conspicuous mark, hit at once and often by the darts of popular scorn. She was not really much hurt; but shame seemed to make her weigh double, and glue her to the pavement. And when at length she was gathered up from the mud, kind inquirers found that, with the exception of her bonnet being crushed—her plum-coloured satin dyed drab in patches—her ill-matched stockings over her shoe-heels—her reticule smashed, with its contents of pastry and bacon, into an indistinguishable parti-coloured jelly—and her face scratched like a map in red ink,—she

was, in the apt phrase of her lord, "as right as a trivet; none the worse, not a pin." But the iron of public contempt had entered her deeply-hidden soul. For her, at least, there was no remedy but instant and full retreat, and she could devise no more appropriate vengeance than that of taking her husband, there and then, back to that matrimonial bower, from whence, in her heart and out loud, "she wished to gracious" she had never set foot. To the first part of this plan no reasonable objection could be offered; but the supplementary arrangement was not quite feasible. Groggy was, after a fashion, an estimable man,—he esteemed himself so highly, that he was independent of the esteem of others; if not gallant, he knew what good breeding was, or ought to, he would sometimes say, for had he not, in years gone by, obtained a medal for it at the Club? If he had a weakness worthy of grave notice, it lay in the strength of his will. That weakness was upon him now. "He came a-purpose to see the show, and he would stay for all the women in creation, aye, if he died for it;" and he very nearly did, as time will show.

When the excitement of this misadventure had subsided, the crowd grew a little flat, and gave signs of growing impatience which became almost alarming when once that slow Fate—the long hand of the town clock—had passed into the last quarter of the tenth hour. There was a sufficient reason for this anxiety—and had they known that reason, they would have proceeded from impatience to murmuring, and thence probably to the verge of revolution. Happily for the character and peace of the town, the whole of that reason was not generally known until afterwards. To explain. The Gala had been observed for several years, long enough to have become rather stale, had not the Founder of the Festival and his able coadjutors contrived some novelty for each anniversary. There was a novelty announced for this year, and around that innovation public anxiety gathered.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAND.

It was not altogether a novelty in Arlton that the musical propensity (we hesitate to use the word talent) should take the form of a Brass Band. For, was there not the "Nag's Head" Band; of recent formation, it is true, but already proficient in several popular airs and marches? On the two preceding holidays, these boozy instrumentalists had been entrusted with the leadership of the festivities—but on both occasions their performances towards the close of the day, had not been by any means satisfactory to the Members of the Society, whose hilarity they were hired to methodize as well as stimulate. The novelty of to-day was the first appearance of the Temperance Band, "our own Band," the organized and representative melody of the association known as "The Friends of Home."

Now a Band always ranks foremost in civil institutions, and on this ground it would appear only due that the muster-roll of its members should be given to Fame. But it must be borne in mind that the prominence granted to a Band, is conceded to it in its corporate capacity, and not to the sum total of individual excellences—besides, from the first moment of its existence, the individual was merged in his instrument, and he was familiarly known in the town as Flute, Bugle, or Drum, according to his particular musical vocation. In these pages they will generally be named as they were known in the town, of which they were and are the life and soul. Each musician was a professed member of the association to which he was professionally attached. The majority were hearty in their adherence to the Society, apart from all considerations of occasional good pay, and the clear prospect of bouncing Christmas-boxes when the proper season should come round, and find them staunch to their principles and correct in their tunes as respectable Waits.

They had been practising for weeks, and they were well aware that public opinion had been turned very intently in their direction, now to disparage, and now to exaggerate their

AFTER MANY DAYS.

professional merits. How could they help being nervous as the eventful day approached ! Nervous they assuredly were ; but being sensible men, and much less muddle-headed men than they used to be, they settled their nerves with repeated doses of the sedative axiom that "nothing could hurt them as long as they stood by each other." They had imparted this feeling of confidence to their immediate friends ; a feeling weakened, of course, as the circle to which it was communicated, widened : outsiders—those who had never heard them practising, nor obtained, first hand, their opinion of themselves—were of course not a little troubled with misgiving, touching their first public exhibition. This misgiving flew like an endemic seizing upon, and paralyzing the most confident hearts in the waiting assembly, as soon as over the envious east wind brought the first strain in advance from round the corner.

It was altogether a most doleful and disconcerted strain. Beyond all doubt these courageous souls were unmanned by some passing but serious fear. They huddled up to one another, recklessly trampling on and being trampled on by strange feet ; introducing, by their jostling, very unexpected but always very melancholy variations in the harmony. Whence this confusion ?

So have I seen the companies all gay, and yet grim, step out from trench mouth to breast the rampart's fire, in close file, with one heart, as one man ; and when the grape has swept the ranks as the wind a threshing-floor, the instinct of true human brotherhood, the grand communion of a fear disciplined into heroism, draws close the gaping ranks—the mass less, but not less dense, still moving onward, now in deathly silence, now with bugle swelling to the clouds, and the dread hurrah of Britain's still unconquered sons. Even so, also, these men—reduced in numbers by circumstances over which they had no control, from twenty strong to bare eighteen—obeyed the precious instinct which changes fear into safety, treading on each other's toes, in hopes that their timidity might by compression be converted into bravery. In other, and less heroic language, two were absent. How came they to be absent ? That's the question.

EPISODE NUMBER ONE.

Two were absent, and of these, one was that very one who, in his own freely confessed opinion, could least be spared. A somewhat feeble fifer was Mr. Felix Broth, if truth must be told ; but still he was a man and a brother, both musically and teetotally, and could not well be spared. His absence was thoroughly explained and partly pardoned on the ground that on that auspicious day (*O, dies Felix*) it was probable that Mrs. B. would introduce into the world another member of the Band of Hope. For decency's sake, as a Friend of Home, and in a very different spirit from one whose conduct, on a like occasion, we shall have to chronicle presently, Mr. Felix was prohibited from all self-display. At that precise moment, he was musing in the little back parlour behind his neglected green grocery, and endeavouring, according to a natural law, to compensate for the expected addition to the sum of existence by mutilating and mortally bruising sleepy flies on the window-pane.

EPISODE NUMBER TWO.

THE other absentee was Simon, a man powerful on the triangle, and in great repute thereby throughout several streets. Being a worker in metals, he had really brought that very capable instrument to a pitch of power and sweetness not usually attributed to it. When armed with his instrument, he conscientiously believed himself unassailable by temptations ; for of late he had studied the story of Saul and David's harp, till he was positive, *à fortiori*, that he could charm away evil spirits, come how or when they might. Alas, it is as true now as in the olden time : "a haughty spirit goeth before a fall," and a terrible fall poor Simon had of it.

The assembled band had waited a full hour for his coming on the previous night, and had come to the rather unwelcome conclusion that his conceit prevented him from

appearing, lest it should be thought he needed a good, long, last rehearsal as much as the rest. But by the hour of cock-crow in the morning, two zealous brethren had met according to arrangement, and had gone to hunt up the delinquent Triangle,—fearful lest something worse than a fit of vanity had befallen him. On inquiry at his own house, they were startled, and their fears rose to an uncontrollable height by the information that he had been absent the whole night. The motherly Bridget and the very dutiful children who were cowering round the half-lighted fire, were in too doleful a mood to suggest any plan of search, or even to hold out any hope of discovery. Unaided, then, by any hints from the persons who ought to have known best, the worthy couple fell at once from the point of misgiving into downright conviction that Simon had been entrapped by some of the numerous foes of his new manner of life. Frequent observations of public-house life enabled them to square their suspicions into shape, and experience, quick and trusty as instinct, directed their unwilling steps to the back yard of the “Bull Pup” public-house. At that early hour no one appeared to be moving on the premises; but on trying the latch they found the door leading to the tap-room gave way, and stealthily entering, they saw the unhappy Simon stretched on the filthy, smoke-blackened settle, steeped in slumber, from which, to all appearance, even the most frightful dreams were unable to rouse him. Hard by, they knew of old, and if they had not known would now have felt quite sure of it, that the grim old landlord was in his den—snorting heavily in his apoplectic sleep. To cry out, or indeed to attempt anything beyond a succession of pinches and quietly powerful thumps on the sodden carcase of their friend, was dangerous in the extreme, and besides, they knew it would be useless. Retreat became necessary for holding a consultation, if not with a view to obtaining reinforcements, but in one heart, the heart of Bugle the tailor, there thrilled a magnanimous shame at the very thought of forsaking a comrade in distress. He would not go without an honest and even courageous effort; but no sooner did he give utterance in most sepulchral tones to the severe invective of

grief and indignation, than the fourfold surprise of a growl, a bark, a bite, and a ponderous blow, convinced him how well-merited was the reputation enjoyed in common by the master and his four dogs, not one of whom could boast of more than one good eye—good chiefly in that that one eye was never more than one-half closed. A judicious retreat was now his only resource. The bravest of men are sometimes wise enough to hark back, when to advance would be folly rather than glory. But he maintained his fair fame unsullied,—fighting ever as he fled,—with his face to the foe, in some measure owing, no doubt, to his sensitive dislike to being bitten in the calves—the spare but precious calves in which he rejoiced greatly. Well escaped, he hurried to the arms of his impatient and anxious companions, only to substitute sorrow and disgust for the prevailing feeling of uneasiness. It fell upon their spirits as damp air falls upon the earth; and it was scarcely to be wondered at, all things considered, that they arrived at the starting-place rueful of face, disconsolate in heart, and pitiable out of tune altogether. The lookers-on were smitten with a dull sympathy, too dull to change into active curiosity. They did not even miss the triangle-man, they only mourned for him as children by the grave side, gloomy enough, but all unconscious of their loss.

CHAPTER IV.

(RESUMED.)

SILENT expectation was now the mood of the crowd, and every eye was listlessly turned to the court-house whence all seemed to imagine the impulse to move would proceed. The door was opened—(both leaves), and underneath the portico and directly behind the bronze railings which tastefully united the massive columns, there burst upon the general view a broad white waistcoat, that looked in the distance like a water-lily; and forthwith from beneath that vest there boomed, with an extraordinary amount of echo from all parts of the quadrangle, the order to form and fall in. “To the

front with the banner," was the most specific command issued. The speaker stuttered a little, and to the common ear the words were unintelligible; but the sturdy bearers who had been in the whole secret beforehand, and had, consequently, been expecting those very words from the secretary's lips, did not wait for the complete order, but, knowing their duty, they did it at once.

The large floating flag of the association had been extended in breadth for the occasion by some lovely additional bordering of tawny-coloured flowers on a red ground, and as an act of reverence to the solemnity of the day, it now waved gracefully between two extremely tall blue supports. The device on the flag was wrought in elegant silver letters on a plain white ground; not a very distinct emblazonment, it is true, but that was of comparatively small importance as every individual present knew full well what the gay device was. As it was being borne sideways along the edge of the faint-hearted band of musicians, their listless eyes were raised at the instance of Bugle, who wished them to congratulate him on his recent handiwork, and the very sight of the old motto seemed to strike fire from the gazing eyes; and this was the case, for it enkindled a flame in every heart; new meaning flowed from the old motto, as if, until that moment, it never had possessed a meaning at all, or as if the lengthening or double mounting had given new meaning to the old truth, but, sure enough, the words did most appropriately express the resolution and intention then instantly formed by the indignant friends of the luckless Simon. "We come to rescue the fallen." It was the armorial inscription of the society. It had been so from the first, but now its fitness was felt anew, as it was chosen to be the watchword of the virtuously revengeful band. What the hastily matured plan was which brought back the light of pride and self-contentment to the eye as well as the necessary spirit to the performances, will presently appear. The procession formed six abreast because the number was so great that if they had walked two-and-two the banner would have been resting from its march before the little array of less pretending colours in the rear had been unfurled for the journey.

To the spectator there was much to amuse, and if he were grave and friendly there was much more to interest most powerfully in the gait and countenance of the Sons of Temperance as they filed off in half-dozens into the High-street. Many looked, as they felt, exceedingly bashful at the publicity of their position ; some tried to look as if they were braving the derision of the by-standers, but as there was no derision just at that point they only looked as if they suspected and even as if they thought they somehow deserved the jeers of spectators and others ; and then not a few mingled their gay airs of defiance with the sober tints of remembrance nearly altogether sad but thankful and joyous as it neared the present hour in which they were openly triumphing over the foe that had long covered them with rags, and filth, and infamy.

One could tell from the kingly step of some, that the war had been fierce and long, had been chequered with defeats and disaster, but had at length issued in victory,—safe and glorious in proportion to the severity of the struggle. And the young were there in sprightliness of humour, pelting with their childish ridicule the demon vice whose power they had not yet known, but whose frightful cunning had been all explained to them—the strings shown to them by which the demon made men dance their way to misery and death, and the wise urchins laughed ; yes, laughed and hooted at the tyrant at whose car-wheels their fathers had been dragged and bruised and slain. The progress made was fitful from the irregular step of the men, but it was tolerably brisk, owing, perhaps, to the eagerness of the juveniles in the procession for their promised day of fun. It was an universal holiday ; not so proclaimed, indeed, but acceded to by all, even by the surly and spiteful (as to an inevitable evil), and all Arlton was in the streets for the day, or else longingly leaning out of window and following the procession with the benediction of envy.

CHAPTER V.

PUBLIC OPINION.

It would be a difficult matter to give even a sketch of the varied opinions and observations which, in the several circles where they were spoken, made the day memorable for displays of wisdom and wit. But, perhaps, a sample may suffice to show that some who were merely lookers on and not very favourably disposed to the society, did feel strongly either for evil or for good, as this great temperance ostentation (so it was called by more than one), was passing by. At the corners of the High-street there lived a butcher and a publican, worthy customers in each other's line and good friends enough, to say they were neighbours. This day with its procession was disastrous to their long-standing friendship, and thus it came about. They, standing at their respective doorways, awaited the crowd. Talking of the weather was hardly gay enough occupation for a holiday, so they bandied bad jokes across the street, neither of them catching the drift of the other but good-naturedly laughing for their mutual encouragement. This intercourse was monotonous, but relief came in the form of occasional interruption; the butcher would frequently retire to whet his knife (merely to keep his hand in), and Boniface to wet his whistle (we suspect), merely to fortify his mind.

When the head of the marching column reached the point where these worthies stood, of necessity their intercourse was candidly laid aside, and exchanged for the more convenient, and not less useful system of signs. But if words, however plainly spoken, are liable to misinterpretation, how much greater risk of misconstruction attaches to mute symbols, such as putting out the tongue, thumbing the nose, or even winking—(how common is it, for example, for a man to wink very earnestly and knowingly, when he means nothing in particular or nothing at all—only wishing to make believe that he does mean something—perhaps something wicked). If these men had been content to postpone all attempts at reciprocation of sentiment—and had fixed their respective

eyes on the crowd till it had passed, it might have been well—but at one and the same moment, it happened that their attention and succeeding thoughts were fixed on the same subject. The one (mentally reproducing the galling picture which had just flaunted before his eyes, the vision of Little Fish Bill, the cockle-man, all in a Sunday suit, and chewing the cud of bitter fancy in regard to the money which had paid for such clothes—what it might have done, where it might have been, in whose pocket at that moment, for no end of whose beer, but for temperance,) was soured and chagrined almost enough to show it in his face, for his soul loathed Fish Bill's radiant attire. The other was chewing the same morsel, but to him it was sweet, and he rolled it under his tongue, and it made him chuckle internally, and purple up through the broad fat cheeks of his jolly face, until his little eyes twinkled merrily. He, too, was lingering on the image of drunken Bill in his new toggery, and his memory was busy grouping a host of others round the central figure of the cockle-man, all of whom had, for months past, resorted to his side of the way, and to his shop, strange to tell, on Saturday nights, exciting (as he now knew) most unwarrantable suspicion in his upright mind by imperious orders for "prime cuts and let it be fat," never asking the price, as if they were nabobs or candidates for the borough at the least, but straightway paying his demand.

So decided had been the increase of custom on Saturday nights, that the reflective Flesher, although from the bottom of his soul abjuring all teetotal gammon in his own proper person and daily habit, could not fail to be rejoiced at the signs of the age in which his lot was cast, nor yet to feel though he strove to hide, a very cordial interest in the procession as it moved before his very door. From a subsequent analysis of his actual state of mind at the moment, it appears that he was conscience smitten, because of his disposition to chuckle over the identical fact that was so well known to have embittered the recent years of his opposite neighbour's life. It seemed hardly a neighbourly thing to be so thoroughly pleased with what was meat to him, but poison to his friend. Feeling thus, he seriously determined that he

would retrieve his error by lifting up his eyes on the crowd as if to show his scorn for them and for their whim, and further generously resolved that he would wink to that effect to his neighbour across the street, by way of cheering him up and making amends for his own ungenerous satisfaction. O fatal wink and ill calculated ! The butcher thought his friend was boozy as usual, and made allowance for the circumstance as well as for the width of the street and mistiness of the weather, so that the wink actually thrown across the intervening distance was a world too beaming and too significant of inward delight for any purely unselfish meaning. The publican might have said on that occasion (as he often said untruly on other occasions), that he was not so drunk as was thought ; and his intellects, as well as his vision, were so clear and sharp that he actually guessed the preceding thoughts in the butcher's mind from the very wink which had been cunningly devised to hide those thoughts from him ; and quickly recoiling, like a hurt snail to its shell, within and behind his own swing-door, he uprooted the friendship of years from his heart, sat down to smoke away his fever of rage, and hours after, when the little blue-aproned boy from over the way came in for the beer, he cursed him from his door.

Many other quarrels burst out in consequence of the morbid state of feeling in general society that day, but time would fail to tell and did much better in healing them all, this unquenchable feud excepted. Had the sons of temperance known that their serried line had sundered two hearts for ever on that day, some passing qualm might have seized upon their spirits. Had they come to the knowledge of those doom-like words of the landlord to his boy "not to draw no more beer for Simpkins's people," they might have trodden the streets with a prouder mien and a heavier tramp, but they did not know it, and all unconscious they hurried, trampling above the grave of ruptured friendship. The truth is, their thoughts were already elate and intent, hawk-like, on worthier game. The cherished secret of the band had oozed out before the first tune was blown out, or fifty yards of the journey had been passed. Like fire on autumnal heath, the enthusiasm of the round-about little drummer whose Christian

name (or surname or nickname, we are not sure which), was Bommager (short for Bob Major), had spread from mouth to ear till almost every heart was nourishing a little lively ember of the general purpose of revenge.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVE KNIGHT.

TURNING sharp to the left at the corner of the butcher's premises was the second best street in the town (but a very narrow and very dirty street withal), and here was the scene already laid in imagination of an event which was to justify the exceedingly martial character of the music into which, after scarcely breathing time enough, the band had recklessly plunged. In this street, Low-street by name, and Low-street by nature, moral and physical, there stood the Giant's Cave in whose dark depths unhappy Simon had been, and, perhaps, still was a prisoner.

EPISODE NUMBER THREE.

THE stronghold was no other than the dull, fusty, little old tavern which had been known, off and on, for a century past, as a public-house under various names, but on which the present tenant had, in a spirit of excusable partiality, bestowed the fanciful name of "Bull Pup." From this very name, and from the portrait swinging in front of the door, which was evidently the production of a hand more friendly than faithful, it might readily be guessed that the owner was, or at one time had been, great upon dogs. True for a guess. But we venture to say, that no one who did not know Dummy Bowler in his palmy days could form a conception of the extent to which a man of proper taste and feeling may devote his life and substance to puppies and older dogs. The mind reverts to the astonishing spectacle of former years with an uneasy feeling of doubt and dreams. From head to foot, from morning till night, from night till morning especially, he was beset and covered, and in a manner smothered with puppies at every stage of their brief and troubled being.

His huge pockets, sunk in strange parts of his shaggy garments, were full to overflowing with choice sorts, kept ready for occasional show to privileged chums, but not for sale, only for the comfort and safety of the brutes themselves, and because the nature of the man could not bear a long separation between the only objects of his love and care—himself and dogs. Then, at nearly all seasons of the year, Dummy was heralded and accompanied by half-a-dozen dogs at least, who, probably, were in training, for they never left off scudding into shops and blind alleys, and under stationary carts, as if in the never-ending, and ever successful pursuit of game. In addition to these more highly favoured (in some sort), brethren, there was a motley multitude at home, whose main business and delight in life appeared to consist in howling him out of the house every morning, or seeking to worry his cord-smalls, and to devour his top boots on his evening return. So true is it, in all departments of real life, that experience teaches wisdom, that it might be said to Dummy's credit, there was not a spot on a dog anywhere for twenty miles round to which he could not have sworn,—while so trustworthy was his skill in such matters esteemed, so implicit the reliance placed on him, so valuable and much sought the help he could render and so well paid, that there was not a spot on a dog any where in the wide world to which he would not have sworn, that is, for a consideration, of course. There was a slight disadvantage attending his very accurate remembrance of dogs' names and principal points, which occasionally brought him to grief. The dogs returned the compliment and bore testimony to the efficiency of his system of education by recognizing him, and, not seldom, following him home, and lying in hiding for a term of days, but this was only the case with the very best bred dogs; curs and common dogs from a sovereign downwards never seemed to know him, or to evince any lingering gratitude for the benevolent kicks, starvation, and curses of their early school-days. This excess of skill of which (as we know to be the case with all true genius), he could not divest himself, contributed a little, a very little, to the general decay of his influence among the neighbouring gentry who were much *more willing to accept his advice and his discriminating*

gratulations on their dogs than to entrust those dogs to his stewardship. But there were other reasons, perhaps more cogent but more generally known, which had combined to reduce the canine following of Mr. Bowler to more modest proportions, until his entire pack (and this, too, his only comfort in the sere and very yellow leaf of his waning years), consisted of four dogs, of four different and three of crossed breeds. Ever foremost in self-assertion as became the first favourite of such a patron and lord was the very creature, the identical "Bull Pup," whose image at the front door might be subjected to periodic renewals, but who, for her own part was as ugly as anything created, and half rotted out of its skin well could be, older than the average of dogs, and, upon the whole, a toothless, wall-eyed, grumpy, morose old brute, and very heavy. The circle was completed by the enrolment of three hapless youngsters on Dummy's hospital-book, who were whining out as fast as they could the remnant of existence which the distemper had spared them. These reasons,—we mean those more generally known, because by Dummy solely and constantly repeated, had relation to his health, and the general decline of the bodily portion of that influence, which, from youth, he had been accustomed to exert. In truth, dogs had so occupied his mind with unselfish anxieties, that he never once brought himself he was waxing obese, and quickly though stealthily verging to the fen countries of rheumatism and gout, until, by painful experiment, the melancholy truth shed upon his mind, that as every dog has his day, every dog-trainer has his, and that both days must have their ternoons, and will set at last, however long they be. And when he knew the truth, oh, how he bitterly blamed the mer; how single-hearted and intense, ever after, became his devotion to gin. The discovery of his unfitness was made in his way. After an unusually long absence from home (twenty-four hours or thereabouts), he had returned to the bosom of his home, had cast aside the day raiment with which most of the dogs were familiar, had indued the dress of repose, and was about to dedicate an hour or two of the new day to the refreshing duty of sleeping off his drink, when the value of his habit received a *fine illustration*, in his restlessness and

"It was years since he
 had seen a set of mastiffs' teeth in
 any place, and he felt out that the unnatural
 calmness of the company on the pretence of
 not seeing him, knowing who he was, and a
 silent but merciless inflictions on all
 of his train, and engaged the voice that, but for
 with beer and long sitting in the ditch, would
 his shaken supremacy at once; and, even if
 it, plausibly enough, supposing that he was
 and upstairs, and that the whitey-brown me
 yard was the chief against whom the voice w
 From that hour he might be said never to hav
 he had been, never looked a dog fairly in the fa
 as he lived. Did he relinquish the drink wh
 even openly acknowledge his suspicions of its
 of his ignominious decay? Oh, no! he wa
 last day of his career. He said it was anxiety
 made him so fat: and published through th
 cities that were familiar with his person
 his farewell in an effective speech, which in
 up by expressing, in a tone of resignation, h
 he rest quietly in his little bar 'till he wa
 In this bar, which, in spite of all its dis
 he insisted on calling his snuggery, he ga
 to wisdom and gin—to the wisdom which

was more easy of attainment as it was invariably extracted from the past in such a shape as to suit the inquiry of the hour, and in methodical proportion to the number of "goes" which the oracle-consultor was disposed to drink and stand. The snuggerly was of itself enough to inspire confidence in the philosophic and practical sagacity of its master and inmate. It was none of your every-day scenes of warmth, light, and spruce arrangements; not a drawing-room cabinet of gems antique and novel—illustrated with commonplace memorials of the tender passion from the first green leaf-bud to the full-blown flower of "Wilt thou have this man?" or blazing on three sides with the radiant series of the celebrated Pontypool steeplechase;—neither was it of the semi-virtuous school—in which high art is duly honoured—the art union—the union of painting and gambling; nor was it of the heavy and decidedly serious cast, in which the furniture looks as if it had been bought at the sale of some moth-eaten registry—the chimney ornaments consist of exaggerated clerical monsters who would have burst long ago with the action of the fire if they had not been iron—and the gallery of worthies in steel is monopolized by frowy, bewigged, be-gowned, or besurplised old rectors—the sole proof that ever such beings had existed in the flesh. There was no affectation, no prudery, no vixenish-looking cleanliness, no painful traces of the mop, or the broom, or the duster;—no trickery to hide the real purpose to which that "*sanctum profanum*" was dedicated;—no flaring lights and mirrors to assist the pretence that whatever business or pleasure might be carried on there would bear investigation in all lights and from every point of view. No; far from all this were the attractions on which Dummy relied for regular custom, and he scorned to adopt those devices which betray a sense that habitual drinking needs fair touters to wile the unwary or indifferent. He knew that all such subtle enchantments vanish with the light of day if not with the first sip of the flat and ropy beer. So far as regularity of custom was concerned, his confidence rested on the firm basis of a knowledge of his neighbours' tastes—a conscious effort to meet those tastes in his periodical compounding of the malt liquors, and

in the skilful infusion of fire into the "pure gin as distilled from the grain." The cobwebs overhead were respectable, they gave a flavour (in fancy) to the stores in his cellar, they spoke volumes (of dust) to the antiquity and solidity of the entire concern, while the air of general neglect was a proof that his time was better spent than in "gimcrack cleaning-up and such like." It was a place to drink in, and to get drunk in, and with a business-like consistency it looked like what it was—a den—a very ill-lighted, unclean, and most nauseating den, where everything served to impress the visitor with the necessity for instantaneous and excessive drinking—if he would not be guilty of the unmanliness of sickness—where everything was so ready to hand that he could neither mistake the great business of the hour nor escape the specific result on which the host's firm mind was always intent. The only safeguard of Mr. Bowler's privacy (so popular and so highly esteemed was his ripe wisdom on affairs of deepest interest to all classes of the community) was the uniform conviction with which every one set foot in the inner recess—that he must leave Hope behind, and several of her sister graces besides, the hope more particularly of being able to remember next morning the means of his disenchantment and restoration to the bosom of his family. The only ornaments of a picturesque and statuesque description were stuffed dog skins, oil and water-colour fac-similes of less honoured favourites, and a perfect ironmongery of collars and chains whereby hung many a moving tale of dogs sorrowful, dogs wild, dogs of great repute, and dogs that had turned out badly after all the care bestowed—whose memory was a cankerworm in the old man's dreaming thoughts.

It may well be supposed that a man who had been all his life in the kennel (as he used to boast), possessed a keen insight into the characters of those with whom, in his latter days, he mostly associated. He knew human nature, he said, and we bear him out in his superior claims, for of a truth he knew it too well to do it any good. To exemplify this knowledge we will only mention that when, from several unfavourable circumstances occurring all about the same time, he found that his receipts were—like himself—falling away, he

ot like so many of his inferiors, who throw good money bad in the attempt to revive a sinking trade ; but, with tier spirit, he endured. Yes ; he endured—no one him complain of hard times ; no one observed any ution in his good temper (for he had none), or in live-, of which he had very little, or of self-importance, of he had unbounded stores. No one, we should say, could, or would if he could, have told again. Occally, indeed, as the seasons of his loneliness both ened and multiplied, a soft-footed visitor, creeping in ares, might overhear him grunting out his one-syllabled hemy, without stint or hindrance, into the clipped ear e equally amiable bull pup, and might observe the com- understanding established between the forsaken pair in allen vengeance with which the beast (the quadruped, we) gnashed his tough gums, and howled defiance to all logs in the street—a note that could not have been more ous and terrific if it had come from jaws bristling with . But though, to outward appearance resigned to the trying fate,—that of being left in the lurch by more iful and enterprising men,—his soul was stung by wrath e pitch of deadly and reckless plots. He had strong in the adequacy of his own resources, if properly ap-. He felt that though he had in past time drawn freely ose resources, they were far from exhausted ; they would, lt sure, see him through, and there were none to come him. He believed in his heart what others only make nces of believing ; and he was resigned to the belief, pro- l he had his own liquor neat for life,—he believed in elebrated conceit, “after me is the deluge.”

is now an established general maxim, liable of course to options, and sanctioned (if memory serves) by those kindred lects Bacon and Mackintosh, that it is best to stick to oprofession for which you were educated,—not to let your ies be allured by more brilliant inducements, nor repelled rashed by disappointments ; or, in other and simpler, much older and familiar words, “let the cobbler stick to ast—to the last.” Now Dummy had been born and bred olican—and a low one. Dogs were a mere incident of his

trade, or perhaps an unwise stepping out of his proper line of business ; and he remembered that both he and his father before him had thrived mainly on the reputation of being the greatest blackguards ever actually reared in the parish of Arlton. Obscenity and blasphemy, dishonesty and cruelty, riotous living and unblushing lechery, had been the making of them—had been literally meat, and bread, and drink to them all their lives long. It was hardly likely, then, that Dummy could fail to perceive that he was letting the game slip out of his own hand, that he was losing caste—and cash ; that he was going to the bad wholly ; because through indolence—sheer fat and sleep—he had allowed his neighbours to fall into the awkward notion that he (Dummy) was growing reformed, or quiet—or, at least, not quite so indisputably the prince of scoundrels as he used to be. He saw this,—he knew such was the case ; and it cut him to the heart to think that his old chums should think so meanly of him, and represent him so falsely and so injuriously to the young blades around, whom he would fain mow and wither for his own profit. But what could he do ? Advancing years put the more active vices out of the question. His corpulence and lameness left him scarcely any means of self-indulgence and self-debasement, beyond swearing with a gouty unction appalling to hear, and drinking without end—in spite of, and to the greatly desirable aggravation of that gout which gave body and soul, weight and worth, to his oaths and curses ; what more could he do ? Well, in the first place, he did contrive to do a little more even in the drinking and swearing line ; though all previously agreed such a thing was no ways possible. Then, with a slyness befitting his age and wisdom, he set himself to the congenial and inexpensive task of making his old house look wicked. He recalled, with slight effort, the more suspicious characteristics of those haunts in London where his early vice was fostered, and he succeeded in making the “ Bull Pup ” about as unmistakably a den of thieving and harlotry as any that could be found. Hanging curtains, faded but heavy, across windows through whose smoke-stained glass the eye of a detective, or the keener glance of a deserted wife, would have peered in vain these years past,—re-hanging

all the doors on noiseless hinges,—boarding off dark nooks, on the landing, under the stairs,—and braiding every door of the house like the front gate of a jail or fortress. A look was enough. Five minutes in that close, still, dark, muffled house, would have suffocated a really virtuous man. It was a web of mystery. It invited, irresistibly, all who were given over to deeds of darkness. It was evidently the market-place where all men, so disposed, could sell themselves for the best price to the devil—and within were the shambles, the chambers of death. Having woven this web, spider like, the old sot sat watching; nor did he watch long in vain. Those who had left him with the not unreasonable fear of his turning good in his old age, came back to him on tiptoe, with a hearty increase of reverence and trust, a well-merited apology for their want of confidence in their old friend, and an honestly intended vow to stick by the old place. And again, the younger spirits who felt themselves blazed out of the gin palaces, for very shame, crawled one after another into the temple of which so renowned a brute was the priest, and in which, to all appearances, the mysteries of Bacchus, Mercury, and Venus were the only worship. It became tenfold more a den of infamy than ever—full of dead men's bones, haunted by the memory of frightful deeds, and cursed in the cries and tears of many a heart-wrung mother, and many a dying prodigal. From the meshes of this foul web, very few indeed had been rescued; and of those few, Simon the Luckless was the luckiest and latest.

He was comparatively young, and he was an incomparable fool—two features in the case which made Dummy only too sure of his ruin, and the temperance teachers only too exultant at his rescue. Mine host was singularly put out by the reformation of this man; not that gain was a consideration so much as because he felt that he had deserved the laughter of his companions for his carelessness and presumption, making too sure of the fool, who proved one too many for him. He did not see any way in which he could personally take steps to subdue the rebel Simon again to his sway, but he resolved to be not quite so over-confident for the future; and as for the individual concerned, he trusted to the general force of old

habits and the chapter of accidents. This chapter was shorter than he had made up his mind for, and the force of habit showed itself sooner than usual, though not exactly in the way Mr. Bowler expected. The hero of the triangle was a good sort of simpleton, as proud as a turkey-cock when there was the show of an excuse for pride, as when he married, or had a little Simon, or signed the pledge, and especially when he carried off the palm in the matter of triangles (he being the only professor of that instrument in the town); but, with the exception of his pride, there was nothing in him that might be described as a drawback for good fellowship, in which it must be said his soul delighted: so that when he came to open rupture with his villanous patron of the "Bull Pup," the support of mere satisfaction with himself soon gave way, and through weeks and weeks of practising with the band, he felt himself relenting in his anger against an old friend; and when the day drew near on which he was to take part in what might be viewed as a public insult to all Bowlers, he secretly resolved that he would step in about dusk all on the sly, just to assure old Dummy that he bore no malice and meant no harm. This step he took, and it proved a false one. He was received with open arms by the forgiving landlord, a smile settling on that face as it had not done for long years. Explanations followed, pardons asked and given, good resolutions criticised, joked about, just a little in a pleasant way—all was as it should be, old friendship losing nothing of its warmth on a new footing. But after a little while a sense of embarrassment crept over both parties: it seemed very strange to be thus reconciled, and to make no sign. They shook hands once and again, but both felt that would not do. They interchanged flattering remarks of a wandering sort, but each felt that they were out of keeping with an hour of such solid satisfaction to both minds. Simon's was not an originating turn of mind—his was plastic rather than creative. Dummy's range of invention was narrow—indeed, he could not well get out of the circle of a whole life's custom; and so it fell out that in disregard of all that Simon had been preaching about, the old man boldly and with generous fervour proposed to stand "something hot and sweet—just a glass, you

know, that would do no hurt, and it should not go no further." Now, if Simon could have proposed any observance in place of this, which should be as proper to the occasion and as expressive, he doubtless would have done so. He had some floating notion of breaking a ring or a sixpence, or shaking hands over the salt; but all seemed to him just then as unequal to the merits of the case; at any rate he had not time to say No, before it would have been as much as the new friendliness was worth to refuse; and when the old ogre pledged their new union in a bumper of sweet steaming lava, hapless Simon and his army of good resolutions capitulated without terms. He took the new pledge; he broke the old one; and, for hours after, he kept on celebrating the double event on his ill-fated triangle, until he broke that too, flinging its fragments at the landlord's head, and himself helpless on the kitchen bench.

As for the victorious schemer, he glowed all night with the comfortable assurance that his victim was all right; but, like a spider of watchful and provident habits, he not only slept with his one eye half open, but when the other half had opened to the spectacle of Bugle's impudent attempt at rescue, he determined to make assurance doubly sure. As the spider keeps on spinning his thread and slime round the captive fly, before bundling him up in his leafy hole, so Dummy anticipated the very probable desires of the waking man, dosed him with gin and milk, then dragged him, for his own peace of mind, into the gloomy bar, double-locked the door, and, for once in his life, made up his mind to having his meals in the kitchen. A pipe and a pint of rum and milk, with an unchewed bolus of frizzled ham, and the important meal, which (except the ham) lasted all through the day, was fairly under weigh. What were his morning's reflections on the unexpected good fortune over night? Did that brave heart mis-give, or recoil, or sink, or anything at all but dilate and project further conquest? No; he knew when to be a little low, as became a man of many adventures and many strange fortunes, but he also knew full well that he was justified in being on pretty good terms with himself and his luck for that day at least. Of course he had heard all about the holiday, and the procession, and the band, from Simon; and now his

memory began to unfold to him what Simon had unconsciously deposited there the night before. His ideas were never of the brightest or most orderly, and on this matter there was some special confusion. He had heard of teetotalism, and he remembered temperance, but even this latter folly had proved such a mystery that he had drunk himself blind in the effort to comprehend it ; so that the former subject was from the first and utterly tabooed. The word had no meaning for him, and the reported fact found not a moment's belief in him. The whole thing was like a ghost—very horrible, very incredible, very invisible, and a thing to be dismissed from the mind with contempt if it could. But, from Simon's account, he was now to have the opportunity of seeing this ghost walk past his own door, in open contempt alike of his incredulity, hatred, threats—it was to be at length a substantial and palpable fact, of which his own eye, if he so wished, might give him faithful testimony. He had not yet concluded to honour the procession with his presence, so far even as to peep through the chinks of the door, or the thin parts of the curtains, when he remembered something which gave him great pleasure and spirit for the enterprise. He had somehow an impression that the grand band, for all its boasting, could not possibly play without Simon's valuable aid. Where he had picked up this notion it is hard to tell, unless Simon told him so himself. He saw his course marked out plainly ; that was, to immure Simon for the whole day at least, to bottle him (as zealous patriots serve each other at alternate elections), and then, having stationed himself at the front window or behind the curtained glass-door in the passage, to enjoy the silent discomfiture of the water-gruellers, and to know that he was the cause of their silence and sorrow.

This feasible and promising plan he put at once in course of preparation, and had just seated himself, thankful for rest after more than five minutes of unwonted exertion, when the noise of many feet broke upon his ear. Wistfully he peered from behind his curtain, and his eye rested with anything but a pleased expression on the stuck-up young monkeys, in Sunday-school order, and in Sunday clothes, walking more like a Band of Triumph than a Band of Hope ; little scamps

that, not long ago, used to be rolling in the gutter before his door, in rags, and hungry,—and now stamping in their double-soled boots, as if they would knock any little beggar down who should dare to chaff them about their former disgrace. These passed by, and the elder professors of that unconstitutional, radical, and unpatriotic virtue, *sobriety*, came in sight. It would have been an eyesore to him to see their side-long winks of arrogant defiance thrown in the direction of his fusty old den; but his rage was more than appeased, just then, by the forlorn silence of the band. He felt that he had done the trick, and winners can afford to be grinned at.

How short-sighted are mortals at the best—how treacherous, more especially to a gin-fevered eye, are all outward things, and to beer-muddled mind, alas! how uncertainly and how untruly are probable consequences suggested. If Dummy had only known—only could have known—what was to be the issue of that morning's scheming, he would have foreknown what never, surely, would have happened; for he would have listened to the voice of prudence, as it screamed from the lips of Simon in the bar, in an entreaty to know where he was, and to be let out of that. To that prayer of fear and doubt he only drawled out a delusive and sarcastic "All right," then turned again to the loophole, from which he snugly gazed on the temperance world without. This look was timely; but it had better have been his last look, as it was already his last eye; for what he saw so enraged him, that he threw off all disguise, threw prudence to the winds, threw the stool crash, bang through the glazed half of the door, and, with an alacrity born of frenzy, followed the stool into the street, as he himself was followed by his *fidus Achates*, the "Bull Pup." During a long course of years it might be said with truth that Dummy's infirmities of temper had kept pace with the infirmities of his flesh; but his disposition had at all times been rather sullen than passionate, and latterly his moroseness had sunk into habitual malignity. It was no slight sense of wrong or insult, we may be sure, which now smote every instinct of self-defence in his breast, and stung his stupid intellect to rage. It was no gentle shock, indeed, which now for a moment roused his paralyzed carcase into spasmodic life.

The immediate cause of his hostile movement was the posture of affairs outside. To pass by his house at all, though it was the only way to the park, was in itself a provocation not easily endured. The opportunity of sating his malice, by viewing from his peep-hole the disconcerted looks of the band, did counterbalance in some measure the irritating presence of so many natural enemies. But now, did his eye deceive him? Was he indeed awake? Not more than one-third drunk?

CHAPTER VI.

(RESUMED.)

THE spectacle in front was enough to beget a doubt of his own sanity, as well as to fill him with alarm. The bugle had sounded a pealing note, and with something less than military precision the whole array was stiffened to a stand-still, right over against the "Bull Pup" front door. After a moment's silence, an awful silence, full of speechless warning, the redoubtable "eighteen," dressed in uniform—resplendent in white and blue, dazzling all eyes with the sheen of brass and gold leaf in their instruments and buttons respectively—stepped from the ranks by a side-movement; turned, obedient to another bugle-blast, right-about face, and fronted the astonished Mr. Bowler, who would just as soon have expected to be the target of a platoon-fire, as the despised mark for the stare of those six-and-thirty eyes. Advancing to the sound, if not the tune, of an equally solemn and loud air, the enemy made straight for the door. But, as we have seen, the ambushed Dummy had espied their audacious progress, and had rushed, like a ravening wolf or wounded bear, up the steps which led to the level of the street. At this point there was a pause—for the surprise of the whole thing was quite mutual—and more than one set of nerves, which had been well strung by the exhilarating strain, were thoroughly unstrung by the suddenness of the ugly vision before them.

The publican was, by dint of much experience, gifted both with presence of mind and animal courage. His foes, on the contrary, were extremely harmless—and he knew it. But

they were five hundred, or at least they were backed by that formidable number, while his only reserve was "Pup"—many degrees more plucky than even magnanimous Bugle, but, alas! by many degrees still more harmless; and, besides, he remembered that his true weakness, after all, was the presence of the enemy in his rear; and as far as he could judge by the kicks, and cries, and groans in the snuggery, the attack from behind could not be long delayed. Simon was furious; and he evidently felt his strength and anger redoubled (as has been the case in all times with captive knights) by the very music which told him that succours were within earshot, although only passing by. There was an idea of shutters in the agitated mind of Mr. Bowler; but it was an idea (he muttered) more suited to a white-livered baker when bread is a shilling a loaf, than to the Van Amburgh of dogs. He whistled for Pup, who was already standing between his legs, glaring out on the menacing crowd, and getting his terrible growl in tune. This firmness of front—this hollow show of resistance—was quite enough to disconcert the best-arranged plan of attack in men whose hearts were cowed by the sight; and it is likely that the mere offer of fight would have been quite enough for the major part of the band, had there not been in their midst at least one stirring and mettlesome spirit. Bugle justified his reputation altogether, and very nearly justified his pretension, by the felicity and promptitude of his action at this time of suspense. At his suggestion (we need hardly say, for the thing speaks for itself) the drum was quickly unslung from the neck of Bommager—rolled, tub-fashion, to some distance in advance—and set on end. A bricklayer's plank, hard by, was thrown across the drum; and then an elevation was secured which would serve either for a scaffold or a platform, as the occasion might require. At first it was a platform, on which Bugle took his stand, as the herald of the besieging army, to announce the *casus belli* and the terms of peace. Amidst decorous silence, broken only by the muffled shrieks of the incarcerated Simon, the bold tailor burst forth in these words of reproach against the fat culprit in front:—"I, Bugle, of the Select Band of the Friends of Home, publicly denounce thee, Dummy Bowler;

and brand thee, furthermore, as the enemy of all homes whatever, but chiefly, at this present, of the home of one Simon, our lamented Triangle——” But here the corked-up wrath of Bowler and Pup burst all restraint. “Whis! whis! Pup, lass!” and the scabby beast rushed between the master’s ill-settled legs with such violence as to throw him, like a huge landslip, all his length on the greasy stones. He fell with a dull bump—sprawled and wriggled, much like a seal on a smooth rock—then shrunk into the revolting stillness of death. Bugle looked like an assassin caught in the fact, and he felt, as he remembered ever after, all over white and cold. Dismay at the event was at first overpowering, and the appalled crowd might have been routed like craven sheep, had any policeman been present with the average quantity of wolf in his official soul. So long as the hapless monster lay stunned, the crowd was stunned too; but when he moved, and raised his bleared eye and swollen face, and gasped and belched his horrid blasphemy, they knew he was no worse; they felt relieved and pleased to hear him curse once more—it showed he had come to himself. To call him back to life, good Bugle, kind soul! would have sold his musical suit, and even, in the desperation of his anxiety, have pawned his instrument; but when the life revived, all his fast-vanishing mischief and retaliation came to him again, and he roared with laughter until the street rang again, and the bowels of his victim yearned for his blood. The fears of the crowd followed the fears of their leader, and with one heart and tongue they made amends for the panic to which they had so quickly succumbed. The corpulent sot slid, like one of his own barrels, end-ways down the greasy incline into the stinking gutter; his face hid its rainbow glories in a cloud of neutral tint; his clothes, which at their best were the very moral of filth, sucked up the standing nastiness of a month’s collection; and even to the one or two whose hearts relented to see him wallowing there, the task of setting him on his legs again seemed useless, and the idea of carrying him too revolting; so that in all probability he would have lain during the rest of his natural life where he was, but for the ever fresh and ever fertile ingenuity of Bugle’s hate-inflamed mind.

With a hint which from one hitherto so successful in his suggestions was of more weight than an argument from other men, the crowd made a rush to one corner of the open space which stood the "Bull Pup" house of entertainment for man and beast. (In this case the two names only showed the redundancy of Dummy's style of eloquence.) Thence they drew machine which seemed to have been made to their order, was so exactly the thing. It was a crane upon wheels, and being brought into a convenient position relative to the incumbent mass, straps and ropes were poked under the unriched carcass, buckled skilfully above his breast, and attached to the powerful pulleys of the crane. "Heave away!" was the appropriate signal; and, in due time, Dummy was once more a perpendicular being: his consciousness of degradation wofully alive, his huge clasp-knife speedily dived forth, caught up, and used to the cords of his captivity; and then, summoning up his long arrears of anger and hate, he made a very mud on his face to parch and crack, and pale from the black fury of his scowl, and sidled off to the accompaniment of a long dog-like yell, buried himself in the recesses whence his victim had just escaped, and was seen no more among men. Few had either courage or curiosity enough to seek him out in his rampant misery of rage, and not a soul on all God's earth had ever loved him. In a few weeks the dust was observed to grow thicker on the curtained window-pane; the lingering paint peeled from the still unopened door; moss, fungus, and straw lay littering on the steps; the wailing of the dogs had ceased; Dummy had been "wanted," and he had gone. Except that tempted virtue and timid spousal love breathed more freely, there was little sign that he had gone; but if the wayfarer, sauntering through the church graveyard of Arlton, should be struck with a tomb-lad of painted wood, near to the pathway which leads to the arsonage meadows, and noticeable for the size of the inscrip-tional letters, and should bethink him of Dummy, he will have the gratification of knowing, that by reason of a gram-matical error (accidental or not), for once in a way, a memorial of the departed was made to speak only and wholly the truth. This is the admixture of formal error and pure truth, as may

be seen by all who visit Dummy's last and only peaceful home : "To the Memory of one Dummy Bowler, for 35 years landlord of the Bull and Pup public-house, *which* was greatly regretted by a large circle of neighbours."

We turn from the spider to the fly—to the unhappy and fallen Simon. After long and vain pummelling at his prison door, and three attempts to pick the lock, (it was rather in his line, but he had nothing but his nails for the job,) he fell into a languid and self-accusing reverie. He had heard of penitents beating their breasts and tearing their hair, and when he fell to and found that he had scarcely any hair to pull, he prayed, oh ! how he prayed, for a little hair—only a handful—that he might have one good pull to prove the depth of his remorse ; but he prayed in vain : so he took to the other appointed pantomime of grief, and fisticuffed his breast almost into a state of cancer. The uproar from without broke on his ear like the hoarse murmur of the distant sea. He trembled as he listened ; and when at length he could stand uncertainty no longer, come what might, he sprang like a chafed lion at the door, and fell through it, right into the arms of his expectant friend, "the Drum." He felt unequal to the task of explanation just then, but there was a pathos in the very silence, an appeal in the downcast eyelids, which sank to the very soul of the sympathizing Drum ; and while the one felt almost happy at the very soreness of his anguish, the other felt not less happy that for one proud moment he had it in his power to exercise the charity of forgiveness, of which his own past life had so often stood in need. Poor Simon would fain have contented himself with that silent and private confession of his shame, but just at that point the great struggle in the street had come to a close, the strong draught up the passage was burdened with the chorus of victory, and tainted with the retreating presence of Dummy. To meet him just then was to brave him at his worst, and for this Simon the penitent was ill-prepared.

Accordingly, with a vow that he would call at the "Bull Pup" some of these days, and settle that particular score, he slunk into the back yard, leaving his tight little friend to face the defeated giant ; and having scrambled through the

hole into a back street, the door to which was generally locked on account of the dogs, he ran like a hunted hare, stopping and turning in his course, avoiding the ways where company was likely to be met with, yet heedless of all else but to escape desperate through shame, and rushed without due notice of his approach into the very bosom of his dishonoured and wretched family. There, indeed, if anywhere, surely he might expect to find the balm which his spirit greatly needed; but alas! there that his sin had wrought most grief, and might have wrought endless mischief,—and there, where his sin had dealt so heavy a blow, it was meet that he should be made to feel it. The wifely Bridget gave him the meeting he had looked for. Her anxiety, long suspense, shame, and fear, of course knocked all her holiday dreams out of her poor head; and as an outward and visible sign of her temporary weakness, she had plunged into the absorbing duties of the tub, once fondly intended to stand over till the morrow; whether from the abundance of her tears, or the caustic strength of her soap, the splash in the face with which she washed her recreant lord, made him howl like a whipped cur; and she, in all the dignity and freedom of much-injured innocence, scolded and scalded the culprit without mercy. Emu-ated of her zeal, the many children of his love flew at his heels, and nipped and pinched them black and blue, crying in the only language of reproach their small memories could suggest, that he was a beast, and a drunkard, and was turning the grey hairs of his children to the grave.

With a heart so softened to begin with, there could be no resentment—no sly, spiteful kicks in return,—no reply to the glowing eloquence of Bridget. He knew it was all true, and his own conscience had rehearsed the accusations so correctly, they could not take him by surprise. He might have expected the portrait of a fool and a felon, but for the tears that came fast and hot on his cheeks, telling of a love in his breast that had also suffered cruelly from his folly. The pathy between those two fond hearts was not dead because it had transgressed. His tear fell upon the chord, and the string of forgiving kindness trembled in response. Bridget, a coarse being, and had a spice of the termagant in her

general temper ; but for her simple good man she had always a reserve of affection ; and when she saw that he really fainted for lack of it, she brought it forth like the box of precious ointment, and broke it at the wanderer's feet, while the little ones were soon remorseful in their turn, and broken-hearted to see their great daddy crying.

When the Drummer reappeared in the street, and re-slung his instrument in silence, many were the inquiries of the crowd as to the fate and the whereabouts of his friend ; but, big with his mystery, he only shook his head, as though he could say, but would rather not ; and it was only when the amiable secretary pressed for information, that he condescended to whisper that Simon was safe, and at home. The order of march was speedily resumed, and though there was a hang-dog look rather, under the affected gaiety of those who had taken the more active share in the late frolic, that soon wore away, and the music again gave—or rather took—time to the pace of the procession.

CHAPTER VII.

THE park in which several hours of the day were to be spent was at no great distance from the town, and they soon came in sight of its inviting outline. The ground had been purchased by one who was not only the friend, but the founder of their Society, and as soon as it had put on the promise of being one day a beautiful resort for the sons of toil, it was made over in trust for ever to the people of Arlton. The privileges of the park were by no means confined to the teetotallers of the town ; for, amongst more general reasons, the giver ventured to believe that, sooner or later, all the poor, at any rate, would renounce the use of that which they would one day regard as slavery and ruin. But it did not escape him, nor does it need any particular demonstration from us, that in bestowing such a boon upon the town at large, he was in effect making it over mainly for the pleasure and advantage of sober and upright men. All might use it, but none could

empathize with his own simple passion for the beauties of art and culture, unless free from the false excitements of

every particular plan of spending the day had been laid out on this occasion, because it had been found in fact, that in spite of the most laboured arrangements for universal fun, young and old alike soon got beyond control and would have their own way of enjoying themselves. It was, therefore, as the orderly line passed the garden gates, that at once into a hundred groups, who scattered themselves as if by magic, all over the grounds; and many a young man of swift foot and cunning in design, found to his regret that the cosy little chair, or grotto, or bank, on which his desires had all along been fixed, was occupied by some fortunate and equally active friends, who looked as if they had settled down for life, or, at least, as if they had remained there since that time last year. As each one was free in the very proper case of family arrangements) to do as he or she might choose, it will not surprise the thoughtful reader to learn that, with one consent, the company began to dine. Eating and drinking is the great bond of social life in England—dinner, the central fact of the day. Before it is preparation, all afterwards is digestion hanging up; and whatever may be the secondary business incident, dinner is the prime consideration. Business is allotted to in the fore part of the day as a means by which dinner is to be earned; in the afternoon it is resumed under the influence of a vague notion that the indulgence of natural appetite must be atoned and paid for. In all out-festivity, what is it that overshadows the levity of the frolics, cuts short the mountebank frivolities of men old enough to know better? What is it that clogs the soaring sentiment of the teens, and redoubles throughout that carnival of thoughtlessness all matronly care, and gives an unusual severity to the tones of conjugal remonstrance? What is it, we ask, that the dinner lies heavy on every mind, as it has hung on many an arm, and will, no doubt, shortly on every leg. When we use high-sounding phrases, such as gala, festival, or holiday, or treat,—or the less sublime

terms, such as an out for the day, a spree, or a lark,—who do we hide under such gay disguise; but the comely, though vulgar fact of dinner? Indeed, the disguise is invented for the very purpose of softening in beholders' minds the extra fuss made about that every-day fact; a very proper arrangement, indeed, when we consider that generally in such circumstances, dinner begins at once, and, if generosity has been the handmaid to prudence, goes on with more or less vigour till the sun goes down, and the vesper bell is tolling for the gardens to be shut.

The starch and flat-iron of civilized life may succeed in smoothing out the strong points of character in a companion that is on its good behaviour in the presence of cut glass silver dishes, and red-velvety flunkies, but even in the midst of such constraining influences, the accustomed and undazzled eye may not seldom discover the precise foible or forte which his opposite neighbour thinks to be wholly inscrutable, beneath the frigid politeness assumed. However that may be, no one can deny that a dinner out of doors, in a state of nature, so to speak, is one of the most instructive and reliable exhibitions of points of character anywhere to be met with, and, to a well-regulated mind, presents a theme of much profitable meditation. The institution of dinner parties as observed within four walls, has for its great moral end and fine cause the promotion of good feeling among the several members of a particular circle. That it does not in all cases answer this beneficent aim, throws no suspicion on the original design except to narrow-minded outsiders; but it must be confessed that it neither does nor was ever adapted to produce neighbourly benefits on a large scale. On the contrary, it is chargeable with ministering to exclusiveness and a feeling of caste. The world on the pavement is in no wise elevated or delighted or reconciled to its lot, or rendered wiser, by the genial light which steals out insultingly from the jealous shutter chink upstairs, or flashes from the fanlight over the mansion door. But at a pic-nic the habitual closeness of sects and coterie and even families, melts away after the first five minutes, and all men feel that they cannot do better than fall to naturally and easily, whatever they may have in hand. Hence it follows

that men recognize each other as men—postpone their pretensions and their pride for a more fitting sphere and season. Hence it follows also that they discover that the whole world's akin—learn mutual forbearance and toleration at a glance, besides picking up invaluable scraps of practical wisdom, which would have escaped their notice had they continued proud. Arlton Park presented a wide field for beneficial observation, studded as it now was with busy groups, who gave proof of our common humanity, by intently devouring a first instalment of the viands they had brought in hampers, reticules, or hats, or handkerchiefs. At first, there was a little of the town-bred isolation in the appearance of the groups ; for they did their best to form hedges about their little dinners, impervious, as they thought, to eyes which never dreamed of prying into any pie beyond that under immediate discussion. But even this appearance of selfishness and disdain wore away presently ; and when the edge of hunger had been taken off, the watchful mind recovered its ascendancy, and addressed itself to the picking up of wisdom, while finishing the picking of a bone. Then the first induction as to the *unity* of the species underwent a slight modification, and was announced mentally as unity in diversity. The unity theory begot charity, while that of diversity afforded hints for self-improvement. For instance, now there was Filey Jones (the hardware shop just opposite the "Nag's Head") : he was said to be a selfish man, and a very self-sufficient person in all matters. It might not be so in truth, but it was not a very far-fetched scandal ; for he was a bachelor (in itself, as a rule, rather suspicious), and he kept himself generally to himself, save when serving customers. He was known to have grudged his young people the holiday, and it was rumoured that he was present only with the ungenerous object of being a drawback and thorn to the joy of his apprentices. He was never known to acknowledge his obligation to any one for any idea on any subject, simple or great ; nor will we be so bold as to say that he made acknowledgments "before men" this day ; but he did rise from that grass a wiser, if not a more amiable man : wiser for hints gained from his nearest companions, and more amiable, we trust, from the conviction that they had learned

something from him. He was his own circle and his own hedge ; so that, if that way disposed, the inquisitive members of the next group might have made reprisals on his manners and customs, and he believed they did so. At any rate, after he had put away about a pound and a half of the juiciest tit morsels of a steak pie, and was wrapping up the crusts in his handkerchief for further use, ruefully wishing that the pie had been all steak and jelly, he cast his eye askance, just in time to observe the provident mother of a hopeful family carefully putting the almost entire steak part of a pie like his own, back again to the place whence it came, in readiness for the next hour's dinner. At the same time he knew that there was one tie between them, similarity of taste, and one important difference, so far as the future was concerned—viz, that they had kept the best for the last, while he had no prospect but crust. He rose, then, with an enlarged idea as to the human race as a series of repetitions of himself, and revolving reformation for all coming time in regard to steak pie. In short, he was a wiser man ; and some slight changes in his general conduct towards both his apprentices and his fellow-men at large, went to show that he had received his first lesson in the liberal philosophy, whose motto is, "I think nothing that belongs to humanity is altogether without concern for me." While the majority of the visitors were thus intent on the first dinner of the day, there was a sprinkling of half respectable, but unhappy, unbefriended beings, who wandered on the outskirts of the pleasure ground, or passed from group to group, with an endeavour after the appearance of men who were above the herd in the matter of appetite, or (as more than one shrewd epicurean ventured to conclude) below the average, a long way, in the matter of wherewithal to dine. They, however, had leisure to observe, and to them we are in all probability indebted for side views of human nature which wholly escaped the well-occupied devourers on every hand. In many a shady, inconvenient, untempting corner, the sons of poverty were found munching, and dividing amongst their eager little ones the homelier crust. They were not ashamed of the crust, but of themselves, and of the life which had brought such meagre reward—the life of careless self-indulgence and suicidal

as well as murderous vice ; and they vowed again and again, with thankful and proud hearts, that, come another twelvemonth, and they would have the dry morsel buttered on all four sides, and a lump of Cheshire to keep it company, half as big again as itself. These were still in the swaddling clothes of their new life of temperance, and their ideas of solid happiness, though released from the long disease of years, were yet weak and crude. It was not in the childish visions of future comfort that most reason for hope was to be found, but in the wilful tear which would flow when the lowly, stammering grace went up heavenwards. The safety of such depended, in no slight degree, in tenderness of heart, the keen sense of present relief and gain, as they bitterly thought of the past. Another class calling for notice was distinguishable by the white rosette of their "little brief authority." It would have betrayed either the superfluity of the office they held, or the unfitness of those who held that office, if they had steadily settled themselves down on the grass, to feed like ordinary mortals ; and, on the other hand, a literal abstinence from food throughout the day would have unfitted them for the onerous duties supposed to be devolved upon them. The wisest course, then, was decided to be of the nature of a compromise ; and accordingly they were seen to buzz about from group to group, excessively important, always in a hurry, but contriving to stow away large parcels of food, either their own (but this was exceptional), or such as was disingenuously thrust upon them by those who hoped for patronage and favour, should opportunity arise, or such as was playfully whisked away, while on its very passage from the basket to the open mouth of its sedentary owner. It is only fair to say, though, that the white rosettes were the last to begin eating, and the very first to scamper off when the hulla-baloo of many children gave warning that sport was afoot. Every care had been exercised by these functionaries in providing peaceable amusements, in the somewhat unreasonable desire to prevent the young people from choosing their own terms and methods of fun-making. Very soon there was a thorough breaking-up of the whole company into new arrangements, and presently the chattering, and shouting, and merry

laughter of youth came, and was acquiesced in by parental hearts, as a defiance of restraint, and a warning that the fun was commencing in earnest.

Standing near to one of the largest groups of rough, strong, hearty lads, a gentlemanly individual, stricken still more in grief than in years, might have been remarked, if only as a contrast to the bubbling up of young life around him. But he was no common, no casual and unconcerned spectator, and the evident emotion with which he was struggling, showed the interest he took in the scene. To look on him, as he stood and wept, a stranger would have said that he was recalling his own innocent childhood from behind the clouds of later years,—longing for its return, mourning that it might not be. Hence those tears, vain tears! But was it because imagination had gone far back, and had brought the impressions of his actual youth into painful comparison with his present character and fortune? Was it because he could no longer leap like the roe, or shout with excited joy till the distant hills gave back his cry? Was it therefore that the old man wept? Ah, know you not that when an old man's fancy bears him backwards through the maze of life, there is many a halting-place before he reaches the green meads of early youth—spots where recollection cannot choose but rest, however gloomy and haunted; spots, too, where thick-falling memories of love, like drooping branches, arrest and hold him fast? Know you not, that in the review of every life, when nearly ended, there are blanks, stretching like dark clefts in the path, and bottomless as dark, which the memory hardly dares to leap, and the dreamer trembles as he recalls the blind haste with which he leaped them first? In truth, this old man, though much given to reflection, very seldom, if ever, went so far back in the retrospect as his own young days. They had been so evenly passed as to have become happily at all times indistinct. They melted into one cloudless and fragrant vernal day. His thoughts, so far as they were engaged with the past, were always stopped midway by an event so frightful, and so bare of softening and comforting suggestions, that his whole life might be described as an effort to hide the vision from himself, by busily filling every

waking hour with kindly actions, and by painting-in amongst the clouds of sleep-land the bright tints of love and hope and faith. His own youth the less needed recalling, as it had been, in its happier parts, reproduced in the life of his son, his only son, and that son's only daughter. On this son's youth he often fixed his anxious recollection, and for his granddaughter he cherished much of the same secret, loving fear. To his eye, but perhaps to no other human eye, the recollected boyhood of his son was as a day born amidst clouds—burnished gloriously, it is true, but foreshadowing foul weather. As a thoughtful Christian, he tried to disentangle his fretted mind from the one great sorrow, as a thing which no grief, not even penitence, could in any way change. It was a fact to be forgotten in all but its lessons, and to be left, as it was, in the past—that is, in the hand of God. But the event was precisely of the kind which, to a faithful parent, is most frequently present, and influentially present, in all his deliberations, projects, benedictions, counsels, and prayers on behalf of a child. For many years the shadow had rested on him as a simple fear, wringing from him in the silent wood-depths, and in the solemn night-watch, the frantic cry, “Now, God of Mercy forefend!” “Spare, good Lord, spare thy servant this!” But for full twenty years the influence of this terrible secret had made itself felt through a thousand channels, in a thousand happy souls, who reaped the harvest which he had sown in tears, and the recompense of his generous well-doing had come to him in the assurance he possessed that his very anxiety and fatherly love had led him to adopt the very best possible means of averting the fell curse which hovered above the head of his child; and that such seed-sowing, indirect and for a long time effectless though it was, would sooner or later spring forth and bear fruit, alike on earth and immortally.

So firmly was this assurance established in his mind, that even when there was everything to discourage him, and enough to poison the hope-spring of his soul, he was driven only to redoubled activity in the duties of his conviction and choica. If any one had known his secret and his great wish, and the slight probability existing that such a wish would

ever be fulfilled, it would have looked as though all his self-devotion and zeal were but proofs that he despaired—had shut out from his heart the hope, and the love too, which had once been his very life. But it was far otherwise with him. He had long ago conceived the rational idea, that all his efforts and sacrifices in the cause of men would tell in the long run to his own darling end—would gather force and volume—till, like the wind-swelled tide, they would break back in overwhelming billows, to sweep away at once, and to swallow up for ever, all obstacles to his long-sought aim. He felt that in the widening circle of his labours for others—for the hapless and fallen—he was gaining experience, confidence, positive skill, hereafter to bear down irresistibly the disease which he mourned to see hanging over and then fixing on his beloved son; much in the same way as the young physician (and the old, too) generously gives his pains, and time, and stores of knowledge, to the poor on beds of charity, but is repaid, even in the very act of benevolence, by the consciousness of wisdom, and nerve, and manual skill, ever growing and becoming strong enough to wrestle with disease at once and successfully among those who can well repay in worldly wealth, or even to save a king's life, and earn the wondering love of nations. And if at any time his confidence as to the one great desire gave way, his sorrow was instantly soothed, as far as such sorrow could be, by the reflection that he had even here extracted sweets and unnumbered blessings for himself and others from the anticipation of the dreadful curse.

We need not tell the story of Mr. Barton's life just yet. It claims a setting of its own. It is a sad but precious history, and we shall tell it as best we can by-and-by. Here it is enough to state that Mr. Barton was the founder of the Association of the "Friends of Home," and had until within the last year or two continued, amidst growing infirmities, to preside over all its meetings. His noble devotion to its interests had lost none of its first fervour; indeed, it might very truly be said that, as his external power waned, his desire and loving-kindness towards the members of the Society, and the objects of their union, greatly increased. From the com-

mencement, his zeal had been animated with highly sanctified parental love ; so that, as he drew nearer to the Fountain from which all that stream of holy love had sprung, the stream rose and swelled, and spread its healing waters further through the waste of sin. On this day he had been advised to remain quiet and at home ; but as the morning cleared up, and his health was not seriously impaired, he could not overcome the very natural desire to see, and so far to partake, the pleasure of which he was in one sense the author. For he it was who had given the beautiful pleasure-park to the people, and he it was who had taught them to appreciate and enjoy its privileges. As he stood and watched the light-hearted sports of his younger friends, many a strange, sad tale of other years rushed to his memory, while many a heart-felt acknowledgment rose to Heaven for good done in Heaven's name to the fathers and mothers whose children were romping before him. He could not help anxiety with such a spectacle before him. He knew well enough that every hope-inspiring trait or incident on which he thought, had its dark other side. As he asked himself again and again, Had he done all he could to press truth in wisdom, and truth in love, upon those opening minds—he could not fail to reflect most anxiously on the fact that minds so plastic, so open to truth, were at the same time pliable to evil, and open to the deceitfulness of sin. His soliloquy was a prayer : the thoughts of one who is both good and old are almost all PRAYER. His utterance was broken, for it was involuntary, unintentional ; his thoughts were hovering midway between heaven and earth : turning from the children here to the Father yonder ; bearing to the feet of God the case of the little ones, and bearing to the little ones, in their play, the blessing, the welcome, the promise, from above.

He thought of these jocund, buoyant, careless children, and of all children, but especially of England's hope—so beset, so threatened, so weakened even now by the long reign of sinful habits—and he cried with faltering voice, and with a voice of weeping :—“ Oh for my country's children ! who will show them any good ? Fathers drown the love Thou gavest with the babe, in cursed drink ; mothers sell their own flesh and,

blood to death and hell. Oh ! who will pity, who can save the little ones, when father and mother turn away and mock their shrill cry for bread, for life, for love ? They have no father ; but Thou wilt take them up, O Lord, the Friend almighty, full of pity, full of grace ! Teach them who Thou art ; stretch out Thy hand to lead and cover them ; constrain them, Lord, to trust Thee—to follow where Thou dost ever lead. Shall these grow up to blast Thy fair world, and curse Thy very name ? Oh, train them in Thy saving admonition, gentle Redeemer ! Suffer them, bid them, make them, come to Thee. Let the lessons of their daily life engrave upon their hearts the hatefulness of all sin ; but chiefly, Lord, that they may shun with hate and fear the cup of devils ! Even in their golden visions, let them see dark contrasts to their present peace and innocence. The hut where vice huddles, wastes, dies ; the filthy home—bedless, chairless, fireless, foodless ; the felon's dock, the down-cast eye, the hung lip ; the haggard, sweating brow—all the mute signs of agony :—then let them leap forth from the deadly grasp of phantom ills, to bless their freedom and their present good—to raise again the protest and the vow which will make such dreams a lie.”—“And for these maidens, Jesus, pardon—hear me. Didst Thou not love such as these in Bethany ? Did not their sisters of old time follow Thee to minister, but Thou wouldst not, for that Thou hadst not come to be ministered unto ? Did they not hear Thee, see Thee, bow down before Thy Majesty of love, and bless Thee as their Saviour-brother ? O pity these ! Thou hast pitied even unto death. Save the sweet sisters of Thy kin and ours, great Lord of earth and heaven ! Ah ! how happy, how free of care, their budding life ! Shall it change to canker ? Shall the greedy worm gnaw these sweet flowers ? Shall these, who glow with maiden modesty beneath the pleasant burden of their fresh young love, and even now pledging their life away into another's trust—shall they, Lord, ever rend Thy heaven with the cry to bind their swelling bosom and their bleeding brow ? Or shall these, too, fall—become the thing they hate ? Shall their spring passion lose its primrose beauty, and be changed to nameless, suffocating vice ? Or, victims to another's selfish

crime, must they writhe on through life like trodden worms—crawl on in penury, 'famine, shame, and mighty mother's grief? Shall ever children gather round that fair one's knee, savage with hunger, cruel in reproach, and crying, 'Mother, give us bread!' and she have none to give—'Mother, warm us, clothe us!' and she herself be naked, with the chills of death upon her? Ah, God forgive me! how can I hold from asking Thee to smite the sapling? Let not the blossom and the fruit fall beneath the coming blight!"—He stooped as though with all his soul he would strive still to say, "Thy will be done!" He bent with solemn reverence, as might the high priest of old, when he had gone from the people to the place within the veil—had offered for himself and for the people, and was bowing now within the holiest of all.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two of those for whom he had so warmly sought the grace of Heaven—two that loved each other in lowly fashion, but with untold truth and tenderness—drew near, in their slow and halting walk, and, struck with the old man's mien, had listened till they caught his closing words.

"The sapling and the fruitful tree!" said the youth, "what can the old fellow mean?—he does not look like a gardener—leastways, I'm sure he is not one in these parts, and I should know, eh, Polly?"

"Why, Jamie, I'm thinking he meant something else—something, by the bye, not exactly about the trees, you know; you're always thinking about trees a deal more than you think about me, I'm sure."

"Nay, lass, it would be better for the trees and you, too, if I thought more of them than I do; but I can't, for the life of me. No matter what part of the tree I'm working on, it always sets me thinking of you. Why, there's the root, now, it's like our love, and I ram it and jam it to make it fast; then fork it up again, to see if I've hurt it, and then stamp it and tramp it down again with a will. And then there's the stem, perhaps as straight as a

poplar and smooth as a hazel ; and I'm glad, because other people say that true love never does run smooth—and ours does, don't it, dear ?”

“No, I'm sure it don't, and never will till somebody I know has wed her great round-faced flame, and taken herself off.”

“Well, then I comes to a knobby young oak, and then, says I, ‘It's rough, to be sure, but it's growing fast and strong.’”

“That may be all very, well, but, if I were you, I should look more to the leaves and the flowers.”

“And so I do, sweet, only wait till I come to them. Well, then, this morning I was set to trim and tidy up a rose-tree, that came from—Lord knows where—and cost a sight of money, and yet it had only one bud, but it promised to be a choice one ; so I went to work and picked off all the dead leaves, and it's surprising what a many there is when you come to look close, green as it looks away a piece ; then there was the little insects that must be all belly, for they eat the green leaves, and they turn green all over. I smoked them off.”

“All an excuse, I dare swear.”

“No, I never smoke of a morning, except in the greenhouse, and that takes such a precious sight of 'bacco this time of the year ; but then I don't pay for it—so I was saying, I got the more part of the greenies to vanish, but just as I was going to get my pint of beer, I spied two or three ugly little beggars—caterpillar like—sleeping and hiding just under the precious bud, but as they wasn't moving, I didn't molest them just then, for I thought I'd give a good look when I wasn't so thirsty ; but, Lord bless you ! when I came back, if two of these varmin hadn't climbed up and eaten a hole like a railway cutting right into the heart of the rose—oh, didn't master kick up a shindy ! never mind if he didn't.”

“And did you think of ME then, Jamie ?”

“Why, no—I was all of a fluster, and didn't know how to make it fit.”

“Will you let me tell you the moral of the spoiled rose ?”
said a kind, tremulous voice, which they recognized as that

of the venerable man whose words had given them the keynote of their present conversation ; “will you suffer me to suggest a meaning that may be of use to both of you ? Forgive me, I’m a very old man, and if I speak to you as children, remember, I feel almost a father’s interest in you. I know you both, and, doubtless, now you both know me. Under Heaven, I was the means of saving the parents of both from heavy trials and heavier sins ; you were young then, but I was even then old, and part of my reward was to be looked up to by the child’s eyes of Jamie and Polly, and to have my name murmured in their prayer. Is that name ever named now ?—do the prayers of childhood still rise to Him who gives you all, even the love of one another ? I will not urge you, but go on to tell you what I think Jamie should think about you, Polly, and the rose. I went this morning, by special request of Mr. Hansard, to see the long-expected beauty, and many others were with me there on the same errand. We soon learned the cause of our host’s unwonted peevishness, and we shared his vexation as we followed to the spot. Enough remained to show how much beauty of hue and form had perished through neglect ; and, naturally, we all sympathized, and some of us moralized. Hearing of your delay, one gentleman made the not very novel remark, ‘Procrastination is the thief of Time.’ ‘So it may be, if it likes,’ said the host, with warmth ; ‘it may steal what it likes, only let my rose alone, confound the fool !’ I rejoined that the maxim might be understood in this way—Procrastination is Time *turned* Thief—and a very dangerous and ruinous thief, too ; for, as Time is always on the move, so Procrastination is always stealing ; and it makes no distinction—it will steal virtue and cash, health, peace, reputation, life itself, and Heaven into the bargain. The Squire (as we call him) did not seem to be in a mood for morals, and so I left him ; but here, as I have watched the gay buds in their blooming beauty, Jamie, I have more than once thought of your rose and the worm. And of you two, I will say, with all faithful kindness, you have nursed your young love tenderly and very hopefully, and, as I hear, it is almost blowing. Have you never *thought that there might be a worm lurking near ?*

Have you seen it, and yet never plucked it off, and in ang trodden it under your feet? Mary, the eye of a maider love should be quick, by rights. How is yours dimmed th you cannot see this danger? You say, perhaps, love is bli to the loved one's faults; but you have made that fault yo own—you have taken Jamie to your heart all as he is; a now I ask you, save the priceless bud of long years' grow from ruin—yes, I say, from ruin—for as none of us can kno the future, we are allowed to speak positively, if the chanc are very great one way or the other; and I tell you that mai such a couple as yourselves I have followed from step to st in their downward course; and while at each step they vow to stop, and could not believe it possible they could be won the earth has opened still beneath them,—lower—lower—t hidden from the eye and from the hope of men."

"I know what you mean, well enough, sir," said the abash young man, "but I can't exactly see as you do; and I do see how a man can do my work without his beer, nor w a hard-working man shouldn't have his glass and his pi when he's done, or to-day, like, when he's out on the spre

"Now, Jamie, it's just because you do feel as you ha said, that I see so much danger even in the pint of beer. amounts to this—you *must go on drinking*; for, work y must, and you say to work you must drink. Rest and pl sometimes, you must, and to drink, you say, is harmless, a a right."

"Well, I maintain beer's nourishing. Look at me a the fat drummer, who only signed the pledge last wee and then look at the clarionet man, and little Bugle, t tailor."

"And Dummy Bowler? why not give us a model once—surely he's fat enough; and, by all tokens, when y are as old you'll be as fat. I know beer's nourishing. you want a heap of flesh as pulpy and sour as brewers' grai beer is the thing exactly to your mind, and will nourish y famously."

"Come, I know, sir, you're laughing at me; but I tell you another argument, which I take it is a regular kno em-down; and Polly here'll bear me out, I know."

Well, out with it. I can't stand without a stick very ; but I have not much fear of your argument knocking down : at any rate, I won't boast, so fire away."

Well, you must know, sir, I tried without beer for a fortnight ; but hang me if I could ever leave off eating, or thinking it, and wishing, and longing, till mother said, 'If I got with an appetite like that, poor Polly would get never a

I spent more in extra meat than ever it cost me in beer. Now I don't call that economical, for all the talk there

is true, Jamie, it's rather a more serious argument than I expected, and I'm not sure that I can answer it ; but I will just say that every stomach that has been habitually under the influence of tobacco and beer is in a state of disease ; and you won't be surprised if, during the first fortnight, it should be like one recovering from a fever. And then I'll tell you an anecdote of my own family, which may give us a little

Two first cousins of my own, Ralph and Edward, were brought up by their parents in a state of comfort much greater than those parents expected when called from this world. Extravagance had been the father's fault, and indulgence of children brought blame upon the memory of the mother. From the wreck of an ample fortune there were rescued two mills and about £8000 in money. An equal division of the place ; and the brothers, who were greatly attached to each other, agreed to carry on their business separately, but to render a loving account to each other every year of how much they had spent of their £4000. They had both been brought up in habits wholly unsuited to their then position ; while Ralph (the elder) pursued his old course very much, and made a complete stand—turned over a new leaf of conduct and consequently over a good many new leaves in the year. At the Christmas reunion of the brothers, the first question on Edward's part was, 'Well, Ralph, and how much of the £4000 have you spent?' 'Only £1000,' was the reply: 'you?' '£1500 was the sum. 'Oh, Edward! I thought you had been extravagant, but you *have* been going it: I'd like to see you to pull up.' 'Thank you.'—And the subject dropped.

Ralph returned to his sluggish business and jovial hunter life, priding himself on his comparative economy, and affectionately calculating how soon he might have to assist his prodigal brother; and when two or three annual meetings had passed away, he found that he had at length got within sight of his last thousand. But what was his surprise to hear the old story from his brother, with a slight addition. "Ralph, I have this year spent £3000." 'How, £3000! why you spent all you ever had, and more than spent it, last year who has been fool enough to give you credit?' 'My o' mill,' was the answer; 'and a first-rate creditor he is, as I good right he should, for he has had every halfpenny of my money.' 'Why, what a ninny I must have been, not to have found you out. I plumed myself on being less wild than you, because you spent £1500 and I spent only £1000.' 'Forgive me, Ralph; I can and will help you. But remember, for the future, that while you *spent* your money, I *invested* mine; and I submit that mill-stones and a steam-engine are more profitable, if they are more expensive, than dogs at champagne breakfasts.'—So, Jamie, by the light of this little tale, your argument stands much about here: you very just say that Edward (*i. e.*, water drinker) spends most, and Ralph (*i. e.*, beer drinker) appears to advantage; but as it seems to me the teetotaler turns his beef and pudding into millstone (muscle and bone), while the beer man changes *his* cash in a champagne-like excitement—rather pleasant, but very brief—and subsequently into bile, and weariness, and premature old age. It must strike you, and for my part I am sure it, that half a pound of good beef is more nourishing than a quart of heavy wet. I feel confident that Polly, both sweetheart and wife, would kiss you with tenfold glee, even if she did get hardly her share at dinner, if you met her with the sweet natural breath of country labour, instead of the sickly smell of a fusty barrel. And then, besides, by and by you know—now, don't turn away, Polly, as if you neither knew nor cared about what's coming—by and by, you know little buds will peep out. Tell me, Jamie—shall they find *the leaves already withering?* They should shelter under the *full-grown flower*. But what if that larger flower conceal

worm—a breeding worm—breeding just a worm for every bud that comes. You, James, never saw your father drink, though once he did; and yet you drank a little, as you say, four years ago. You drink more now, for all that you are in love's hey-day, than you did then; and where will it end? I know you spurn the thought of being a drunkard; but who is to save you? How are you to know the point of danger; and how stop yourself, when your stout heart has wasted all the strength needful for a firm resolve? But mark what I would say: your children will begin where they find *you*; and, oh! I speak from bitterest knowledge, you will be powerless to call them back. And would you risk it, Mary, to hear your husband curse his early folly above the grave of your boy, shattered in his prime, and tumbled by the demon of drink into a dishonoured grave? I tell you that you no more need drink on earth, than you will do if you go to heaven; and if you would have, as you, perhaps, too fondly dream you will, a heaven in your earthly home, bar the gates for ever against drink. Poverty, and sickness, and heart-wasting separation *may* come, but with drink they *will* come. The sober man can meet grief—that is, only manly grief—with all shapes of ill; but the drinker, long unmanned, can only fold his hands in worthless despair, and seek his solace where he found his bane. Then, Mary, lift you up, with gentle hand, the leaves of that blushing bud—your all but nuptial love; and pray your gardener husband pluck the sleeping reptile off, and cast it far away. God bless you both! Lord, hear an old man's prayer! I've kept you long, and I fear you think I am prosy; but, old as I am, my heart is full of youth; and if you send me a bidding I'll come to the wedding, to rejoice heart-whole with you if you have taken my counsel, and to pray for you if you have not. Good-bye!"

CHAPTER IX.

AND now the plaintive bugle and the rolling drum gave public notice of the well-felt fact that tea time was drawing on. Obedient to the summons, little boys stopped in their cricket runs, and threw the bats anywhere, proudly, for less boys to pick up and take home. Hot words froze on the lips of heated disputants. Muffins was the ruling spirit of the hour, and buns regained the ascendant. Myriads of nutshells cracked resentfully under thin-slipped feet. Thorn-bushes, enamoured of the unwonted stir, stretched out their arms to take and give mementos of the feast. Wounded parasols, and missing umbrellas, torn frocks, crumpled bonnets, fretting babies, truant boys in trousers, and lagging girls in ditto, shoals of open and audacious orange peel, shoals, too, of shame-faced, half-hidden oyster-shells and periwinkles, large crumbs but very stale, many corks and bottles, too, but mostly "pop." Blue tickets with great seals, club-medals once and still prized, ribbons beyond all price, elder daughters rudely cuffing unruly brothers, and smiling sweetly on taller boys beside them; weary matrons with difficulty resuming dignity, and having recourse to scolding; victim fathers, loaded with infants and hampers and garden chairs, and the refuse stuff making larders in their Sunday clothes. Ever indefatigable white rosette men, with opera ties on one side, trousers hitched up to a degree ungainly, and waistcoats brilliant still, but spotted like the sun. Such was the motley of the scene; but no brawl, no loud curse, no rude purposed hustling, no lackadaisical, full-blown dandies, with three sheets and a half in the wind, to ogle and insult the daughters of trade and toil. Decency had been queen of the feast, and her sceptre waved even when fatigue had invited disorder; while high over all waved the banner, and far and wide resounded the peal of the immortal band, who had consumed lemonade enough to supply them with wind for a month, even when playing so lustily as then, "The days when we went gipsying." The glowing sunset played upon the waters, the gentle night wind shook the shadows of the rustling trees on path and plot, the silver fountain whispered, the roosting birds twittered, and all but

ing. So as the multitude passed from the scene which temperance had made almost a second Eden—Eden, with its thousand charms, breathed a blessing and a peace upon their souls. True, there were crying youngsters, who, what with their sullen looks and knuckled eyes, brought to remembrance the Peri in “Lalla Rookh :”

“One morn, a Peri at the gate
Of Eden, stood disconsolate.”

But a gentle message of expostulation and rebuke, together with promises of an *ad puerum* but rather vague character, soon bore the lingering Peris in the maternal wake, to the homelier scenes of supper—combing, washing, and an early bed ;—an early bed, we say advisedly, and could summon many a bluff boy to swear, in spite of clocks that had been tampered with, that, “it was long before the time, and he knew the reason why.”

THE GALA DAY

Part Second.—In-Doors.

CHAPTER I.

THE REASON WHY.

“THE Friends of Home” had made a day of pleasure, according to a definite purpose which had forsworn, or at any rate postponed, the counter and the forge, cooking and the wash-tub. If the festivity had terminated with the amusements of the People’s Park, there would have been a large surplus of energy uninvested, and a very favourable opportunity for profiting as well as amusing the public mind suffered to pass. But the buoyant spirits of the holiday makers were not doomed to evaporate so early in the day, or with so little actual gain. The scheme had been well considered beforehand, and it had been arranged that advantage should be taken of the good temper and hilarity of the festal time, to reproduce the arguments and appeals which in former years had been as the germs from which the full blossoms, so fair and fragrant that day had sprung. Besides, it was a matter of routine, that a statement of accounts should be laid at least once a year before the wondering and bewildered contributors to the general fund of the Club. This statement of finance, in itself, was sufficient to call for a Tea Party, and to constitute an anniversary meeting. Every preparation had been made, in every department, and in the most honourable spirit on the part of every one officially concerned. The Town Hall, which in the morning had been an

eye-sore to the curious, a source of mysterious pride to the privileged white rosettes, and the cynosure of the motley crowd, was now open to the "open sesame" of a blue ticket with a little red seal in one corner, and the initials of a name of power in the other corner. Resplendent with gas, every window looked like the mouth of a glass furnace, and almost daunted the wayfarers who had grown accustomed to the dimness of the sparsely-lighted street, where the three or four lamps seemed to miss the company of their constant friends and helpers, the shop windows; and instead of exerting themselves to make up the deficiency, were sullen and indolent, and victims to the furtive breeze, and water in the pipes.

Even at an untimely hour a crowd had besieged the front portals of the hall—anxious, fretful, impatient, for the enjoyment of their shilling's worth, and desirous of getting, among other good things, first-rate seats, and as much of the light and of the hot atmosphere as their blue tickets would purchase. Resolutely had the elders among the rosette-bearing class set the premature demands of the crowd at defiance; but a strange rumour had got wind, that younger office-bearers had yielded to seduction and bribery, and had, by back-stairs influence, contrived to smuggle in the favoured and fair ones who had marketable bribes to offer to such gallant stewards. After this rumour had gained pretty general currency and a most painful hold on the popular mind, the storm of tongues, umbrellas, pattens, and dark-lanterns burst with redoubled fury on the frowning door, until it had been flung open from within, to save it from being flung down from without. Great, however, as was the first instalment of the crowd, happily it was not to be called large in comparison with the rooms, and it speedily retrieved itself from disorderly and riotous behaviour. On the basement there were three available rooms. On the right hand, as you entered, there was a door-way large enough for a ball-room, and a great deal too imposing as an introduction to an insignificant, temporary kitchen. Above that doorway was the bust of the immortal father of Modern Philosophy in bronze, and such lineaments as were discernible in the dark image seemed to frown upon

the senseless proceedings over which he was an involuntary sentinel. Right opposite the main entrance was a door, which led first into a court—the civil court, in point of fact, but it was known to be lighted with only a solitary lamp; it was believed to be appropriated to the trappings of privileged, or perhaps only official persons,—and it was sternly barricaded by a woman so broad that her flank would have to be turned before she could be pushed back within the barrier line by any enterprising escaladers. But on the left hand, under the guardianship of a bust about the same size as that of Bacon, quite as awful, quite as dark, but much less distinguishable in its features or expression, a door opened into what was well known as the ordinary or little justice-room. At quarter sessions time it was a robing room, and so also at the time of the county ball. At other times, it was simply the magistrates' room; and at other times a lurking place for the housewifely appurtenances to the larger establishment,—such as dusters, dust-shovels, cobweb brooms, and rickety implements for the maintenance of cleanliness on a great, though only occasional scale. Herein was a portentous library of the 30,000 Statutes of England, more or less condensed or left out. Here were business-looking pigeon holes, and awfully suggestive recesses, shelves, and cupboards. There, too, was a massive *lit de Justice*, as the French might perhaps have called it, but which Englishmen would denominate an easy chair, at the warm end of a horseshoe-shaped blue baize table. Generally speaking, the English mind is fully alive to the very circumstantial and accidents of English law, and pays involuntary deference to the black death-planks at the debtor's door, and to the shiny buttons of the policeman's coat,—much more, of course, to the antiquated quills, the parchment-looking foolscap, the monstrous pewter inkstands, and the brilliant blot-paper, stainless as Justice, or spotted like the prisoner at the bar. But when policemen are confined in their functions to doing nothing at all, and to saying less than nothing, outside a court-house door,—and when magistrates are believed, and even known, to be in their own mansions as jolly and benevolent as ordinary men, and a great deal less terrible than the bulk of men,—English awe of the mere surroundings of law

gives place to a superciliousness which, we must say, is a little overdone, and smacks of a concealed effort after indifference, but answers sufficiently well when the only object to be gained is that English males should hang their hats up without fear, and English maidens and spouses throw off all superstition which would deter them from freely using the cupboards and shelves, and easy chairs, and horseshoe tables, which once a sennight are sacred to the mysteries of the Blind Goddess, and the dignified J. P.'s.

In this room, accordingly, there was an unceasing turmoil for an hour or two,—and indeed up to the very moment of saying grace upstairs. A large screen served to board off a little gloomy corner where hats, umbrellas, goloshes, and mufflers were distributed on extemporized pegs, or bundled indiscriminately into a heap on the floor. The great space (including the gas and the fire, the shelves, the cupboards, the table, the chairs, the snug little out-of-the-way spots) was inviolably dedicated to the service of the fair, and in no long time there was a perfect museum of antiquities and novelties, both in person and in dress, gathered within that irregular triangle. Bonnets in boxes frail as themselves, and both made of chip; boas sable, boas rabbit, boas pussy, boas new, boas old, boas fluffy, boas mangy, boas long, boas short, boas of all names and types, and of all origins, from the romantic wilds of Kamtschatka, and from the sludge of a neighbouring pond, or the marine stores of a neighbouring factor in the skin line, were here, there, everywhere, coiled up like hibernating hairy worms, or digesting rattle-snakes. Wherever the boas were not, and mingled with them wherever they might lie, were mittens, pattens, shawls, combs, caps, and at least one front—Miss Gibbins's (who was of an age not only to require such aids to beauty, but to withstand the evil of such snares to virtue, and to be unmoved by sneers of others, and who had made a point of bringing her every-day wig, lest the night should set in damp, and blight the shiny glory of her new ringletty brown one). In this sanctum was the finishing touch given to the hasty preparations for which the interval of the return home to put the children to bed had been insufficient, and that delicate re-arrangement of rumpled curls

and collars which prudent wrapping-up had rendered necessary. Some of the gentle crowd had been there quite long enough for all proper purposes, and were already wasting their leisure in quizzing and scandal, besides blocking up the room to the great inconvenience and indignation of new comers, as well as of their male friends, who were airing their legs on the staircase and landings which led to the festive hall above.

Miss Gibbins (as became her age and social standing) was the first to make a move ; and bravely cutting a channel through the concourse, she was soon in full sail up the broad stairs, followed by a whole bevy of arm-locked, simpering youngsters. At the curtained door of the large room, there was another pause, another press, for indecision seemed to prevail in all minds, as to whether it would be better to risk stifling in a good place, or to sit in a draught where nothing could be seen or heard. The indecision was not set at rest by the vague shouts reverberating round inaccessible spots, "Plenty of room up here, ladies;" nor yet by Miss Gibbins' ghostly caution, "It would be so awkward if one *should* faint;" but by that general progressive tendency which impels the human race to migrate when hungry hordes are thrusting from behind. Arrested at the very door, every eye had time to recover from the dazzling glory suffused over platform and benches by the grand chandelier (only lighted about twice in a twelve-month), and to gaze without pain, and with much complacency, on the true marvels of the scene before them. Huge evergreens that must have come from Dodona, so large, and so brightly, darkly verdant, and must (one should suppose) have been ordered to grow where they hung, by the silver-voiced Apollo himself, so high up on the smooth walls did they crisply rustle to the draught. Immortality was (as Miss G. explained) the sentiment of the evergreen, and all minds felt the force of the allusion, more especially when they gathered from the embroidered flags on the four walls, that the Society of the Friends of Home had expressly appropriated the sentiment of the holly and yew bushes around, in *such stirring mottoes* as—"Our Immortal Founder," "Nil *Desperandum*," "Sow by all Waters" (this last in conspicuous

and emphatic emblazonment); while the two-legged banner waved its motto, "We come to rescue the fallen," much like a visible echo to the texts on the other three walls. Places were found, changes were tried,—first places were lost while trying the second, and the second on trying to regain the first.

CHAPTER II

TEA, ET CÆTERA.

At length there was the appearance of order, and indeed, there was a martial reality about the ranks, arising partly from the extreme difficulty of crushing into a place, and partly from the absolute impossibility of getting out again. For now the intervening spaces from form to form, and back to back, were themselves blocked up, so much as to necessitate a leaning forward hurtful to delicate chests, by reason of the passing to and fro of puffing, wheezing, red-faced, tight-chokered, irritable individuals with urns, tea-pots, pitchers, and formidable burdens of lukewarm muffins and sweaty toast. As if by preconcert, after everything else had been deposited, there was a hand-to-hand passing of large dishes blooming with ham shavings. Indeed, it had been resolved by the committee of provisions, under the influence of that love of fair play which is the glory of Englishmen, that, judging from former experience, it would not be advisable to put the ham slices as a temptation to the weak and hungry, whose very weakness might be foreknown by the fact of their coming early. Although in the wide world without there was a pretty extensive adoption of the principle "First come, first served," these reflecting counsellors did not deem it a wise or neighbourly principle to introduce, without any limitations, into a company who were on a footing of vulgar equality at a shilling a head. The ham was the crown of the feast, and the principle on which it was introduced was a master-piece of strategy which completely foiled the chuckling selfishness of those who had purposely come with stomachs empty of

everything, and with minds full of evil designs on the muffins and ham—but especially the ham. When all was ready on the table, and everybody more than ready to fall-to, the hum of many voices broke up into a hundred coughs, hems, and other petulant signs of impatience. This plain intimation that all were waiting, induced the amiable Secretary to lay aside, as if intending shortly, very shortly to resume, his *dolce far niente*, and after a benevolent and inquisitive survey, to propose a song of praise. All were willing to accord at least external reverence, and therefore all rose to sing; but it would appear that fresh illustration was about to be given of the well-attested truth that there is no such thing in the world as unmixed good. For it was soon discovered that one effect of the brilliant musical display in the gala, was to excite a very general disposition to music in the company assembled, and in some minds—many, we should say—a spirit of rivalry fed with envy. Now it seemed that a fair field and no favour was open for a contest. The band numbered some eighteen, (as we have seen), but then they had instruments of incredible power (for chamber music), and it was considered not unfair to pitch, as against these eighteen, the whole vocal violence of six hundred lungs. The ambition displayed itself in loudness, the envious spirit in swiftness. The tune, unfortunately for the band, was a common one to sing, but a new one to them on their instruments. The whole lung power, then, was developed at the second note, and the band was as good as stifled; while the malicious and secret foes to their well-earned fame, posted on at such a rate that, by the end of the first line, the band was nowhere. In such a volume of sound each one felt he could do as he liked, and have an unrestricted try at all the parts. The effect was prodigious, and in every sense, and to every sense, *stunning*. There must have been a very large proportion of the assembly who were thus, by outrageous exercise of their lungs, adding dangerously to appetites already keen enough to intensify official difficulties on the subject of supply. But there were a few (oh, no! call them *many*, for one such, in some sort, counts as ten thousand) who lent a lowly part to the simple and familiar hymn, while their folded hands, and closed eyes, and quivering lips

bespoke feelings too deep and too holy for utterance, even in a song of praise.

Twelve months before, some of them had been attracted by the light thrown through the gloom in which they were sauntering, cold and wretched, to their naked homes ; they had crawled, half tipsy, beneath the blazing windows ; had listened to that hymn, but knew not the words, and understood not their power or purpose ; had longed to be within, if only to appease hunger and to be warm for one rare, short hour. And now ? They were within, clad, warmed, saved, blessed, hopeful, cheerful ; and their hearts were swelling with a gladness that finds no vent but weeping. Surely, since the day when, at the base of the Babel tower, fathers, sons, mothers, daughters, kinsmen, tribes, strove, with mingled howls of dread and mad articulate shrieks, to speak a forgotten, a perished tongue, there never has been any noise so confused as that which follows the moment of pause after grace is said on such an occasion ; a moment which serves to sever the earthly from the heavenly, and teaches us how near and yet how distant, and how different, is the one from the other. What a compound of sounds, over and above the common mixture of melodies to be heard in every crowd ! But how admirably is every part of great Nature fitted to every other part ! Only imagine what an appalling thing it would be to visit a scene like this in the ghost world, in the great *Sheol* of the Hebrews, for instance. To look upon six hundred bodily forms silently going through such an infinite variety of antics, and stowing away such handfuls of seeming substantialities ! Well, then, is it not a wise arrangement of Nature, when six hundred people of all ages take a meat tea in one apartment—is it not a relief rather than otherwise, to have the clatter, and hum, and buzzes mixed up into one amazing and deafening compound of sound ?

It would be invidious to institute too close an inquiry into the relative value of the ticket that admitted to the viands, and of the viands that were admitted to the interior of the ticket-holder. There is not any particular difficulty in forming a general notion of how matters stood, relatively, after a good half-hour's experiment ; for a shilling, though it will go a good

way in muffins, has its natural limit somewhat sooner when ham and tea are taken into the account. In some quarters there were symptoms of discontent—generally, however, such a kind as to be allayed by playful rebuke, or else ultimate replenishment of desolate muffin-plates. Our friend Mr. Muggins offered himself a sacrifice to the popular appetite at his table, and ran some risk of realizing his own condition of the morning—"dying for it." What little leisure people could afford for such an occupation, was spent wondering however Groggy could have squeezed his way in such a good spot for satisfying the desires of his nature. Once fairly ensconced and occupied, public wonder was converted to the greatness of his capacity for ham, and the utter improbability of his ever getting out again in his swollen condition. This rotund individual ungratefully spent the strength he had appropriated from unlimited victuals murmuring at official meanness. With lobster-like eyes, and cheeks flaming like a lobster boiled, he turned to the extent of a small angle, and confronting a pale slim waiter cornerwise, demanded, with terrifying emphasis, whether "they meant to starve 'em all?" Meekness is the true wisdom of the weak, and the slim waiter knew it. He answered, with a gentle sarcasm, "You've had your sixpenceworth, I'll be bound, old cock; so never you start crowing." The round man was cowed, then enraged; and seizing upon the affront as an excuse which he very much wanted for not staying to hear the speeches, he groped with his feet for his hat—roused bitter and lasting feuds from under the table by the reckless infliction of kicks from his hobnailed Bluchers—made one grand experiment in the getting-out line of policy—succumbed under the rising indignation of persons who neither would nor could bear his weight in the small of their backs—suddenly flopped into his seat, settled his head into his apoplectic neck and secretly resolved not to listen to a single word of the speeches. This incident was exceptional, thought not altogether a solitary one, if we are to believe the statement in the *Arlton Journal*, by one "Philologos," a lean light-haired philosopher, who made himself conspicuous all through the festival by casting eagle glances everywhere, and constant

shouting "Waiter! waiter!" in tones horribly like "Fire! fire!" He said—and he ought to know—that the whole thing was shameful; and he should certainly summon all the white-rosette men before the next meeting of the committee.

The matronly and maidenly middle-aged presidents of trays reposed on their laurels (one at the back of each chair), while servitors, weary and reckless, made a clean sweep of the crockery, and—we nearly said—crumbs; but, in good sooth, there were no crumbs left.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPOON IN THE CUP.

THEN, blushing girls listened, with averted head and vacant eye, to sweet nothings that came from somewhere behind; and, when any one looked, said "Don't!" and wondered when the speaking would begin, and where the Secretary was all that time. Now, though we fear the inquiry in this quarter was but a blind and make-believe, we will venture to reply that Mr. Sec. was at that moment pretty nearly where he had been all the evening—lolling at half length, and so taking up two seats and a half (as who should hinder him?) at the first table, in the place of honour, and of profit too. Of profit, it is said; for though in external seeming there was no difference between the viands on that table and those lower down, we happen to be in the secret, and can vouch for it, that the ham was thinner, and more of it; the muffins, by a well-regulated method of service, were hot-and-hot even to the last; and the tea had once been in China, and was in china then, and might, but for its quality, have been set down at 3s. 8d., it was so plentiful and strong. We would not insinuate anything to the disadvantage of the amiable Sec.; but as he alone possessed a knowledge of the programme of the evening, to the inquisitive fair around he was the idol of the hour—and it's really astonishing what quantities of food idols will on some occasions swallow. Whatever may have

been the precise amount of expansion that took place internally, at any rate, the process which had been going on for three-quarters of an hour, apart from the more public gaze, resulted in imparting greater breadth than ever to his serene and benevolent face ; so that, when he rose from his recumbent posture, and shone out on the company below, there was an ill-suppressed murmur, or purring, which told how glad the "Friends of Home" were to see him once more. Gracefully inserting his finger and thumb in his white vest-pocket, and feeling, as he well knew, for nothing, he proposed, in a voice serene and flat like his face, that if the Friends (a joke this !) had quite finished, they would sing the usual verse, which accordingly was performed this time with an effect the reverse of the former experiment. The band had complotted, and by their superior science, and not having to mind the words, they succeeded in beating the amateurs hollow ; for even the bassoon had sat down before the finale of the general repeat, which hung upon the ear like the dying blast of an organ out of repair. Thus, with becoming gravity, the more serious part of the affair had been brought to a close ; and now nothing remained but speeches and sleeping, unless indeed we may include listening and vociferation.

Let not the Friends of Home think that in this description there is anything to endanger the esteem in which they are so deservedly held ; for it is a fact that in all large unselected assemblies, where food is introduced, there is sure to be much that is irresistibly droll ; and, besides, out of the six hundred present, not more than half were members of the Society, as might be judged from the numerous cases in which, with a guilty wink, one had whispered to another, "that it was all as it should be, but, for that individual's part, a little of something short would have mended the tea ;" and the repeated observations, of a very suspicious character, "that that ham was underdone, and too fat, and lay very cold on the stomach." Moreover, as was afterwards reported with grief by the amiable and vigilant Secretary, two short hours only had elapsed, and the tap-room of the "Justice's Wig," at the end of the yard, was more crowded than it had ever been before by enthusiastic and droughty disputants, who contrived

to recollect and illustrate the arguments of the evening by the aid of copious "goes" of brandy-and-water.

Quiet was at length restored (or, perhaps, we should be more accurate if we said, quiet was for the first time secured), and matters seemed to be coming to a point ; but as in the regions of air a deep lull is often the space within which the fiercest storms are nursed, so on that terrene sphere, the platform, there were symptoms of an inevitable tempest, in the graceful investigation of a red book, which looked so like hymns, that the light-haired young man felt himself moved to cut a slit in the end of his cane, and, having scribbled a little note on his mother's back, to hand that missive, at stick-length, to the nearest member of the platform group, which communication produced so decided an effect, that we felt bound to procure a copy. It ran thus:—"Respected Sir [addressed to no one in particular],—A humble individual, who has observed with pain the manifest and unbecoming rivalry existing between the band of the Friends of Home and those Friends of Home themselves and others, takes leave to suggest that there be no more singing."—Signed "Philologos." The suggestion was received as it deserved ; it was an extremely happy one on more accounts than the one specified ; for the stranger gentleman, who was to be the star of the evening, had chosen a hymn of a very peculiar metre indeed, and the Secretary was ashamed to confess his fear that the band did not know a proper tune for it, and were hardly as yet skilled enough to be safely trusted with the dangerous licence of adapting a common to a long or a long to a peculiar metre.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHAIRMAN.

THIS difficulty removed—this cloud dispersed—there remained no reason why the amiable Secretary should not proceed to announce and induct the no less amiable chairman ; and why should we not follow his example ? We see no reason why. A slight sketch will answer for his bodily

and exterior characteristics, and serve to present the reader with at least a dim photograph. Erect in gait until he began to speak, and then, as the fashion for chairmen is, painfully stooping, and mottling his knuckles on the embossed pattern of the green table-cloth, one might describe him tall, but at the same time weakly in the spine. His dress of black and grey was sleek, well made, and very perfectly clean; there were no ornaments beyond two or three shirt-studs of the simplest workmanship, which were generally, and excusably enough, regarded as ordinary buttons, and might have been worn by a Quaker without proving a stumblingblock to his people. Then there was just a spot—a bright spot, a yellow spot—somewhere below his waistcoat—a kind of breaking out; for a gold watch, put it where you may, will assert its claim to esteem, and show its whereabouts. *His* watch was in a fob; and this fact plainly said, "That man had a father, and a very respectable father too." The appurtenances of the throat were faultless, but not all white; for he recognized no necessary connection between the pulpit and Miss Gibbins's easy chair, and would just as soon have appeared in a surplice as in a prim and snowy neckerchief. As the eye travels slowly from the horizon of the little rickety table, so as to take in the whole man, it rests upon a countenance which, with all its sedateness, is by no means tame, and, with all its animation in speaking, is by no means an easily read index of the man behind it. The head, being partly bald, presents an appearance of pure but not very massive intellect; and many who aspire to phrenological distinction would rejoice to have the mauling and fumbling of that head for a couple of hours. But to resume (the expression is quite in keeping, for all chairmen invariably wander wide of the mark, and if they speak long—as they shouldn't—they have "to resume" a great many times), the eyes were light; had once been blue, when reflecting a sainted mother's smile, and even now were not exactly grey; and if they were, they were still beautiful, for there was a depth of light in them, like a star-gleam in a well—a light of true human love—the love that watches over all human liberties and rights—the love that mourns all ignorance and bondage—the love by which Divine

faith works in the behalf of man and God at once. The nose was not Roman ; that is to say, it was not broken. He looked like one who had had no bloody encounters in youth, to be remembered gratefully as the date of a Romanizing tendency in the nasal growth. It was not Grecian either ; at least, if we can form a mental picture of that great desideratum from the multitudinous variety of shapes which claim its envied name—from the triangular cartilage of a delicate miss in her early teens, to the magnum-bonum-shaped proboscis of Lord Luff, the great Parliamentary man, which gracefully meanders all up and down his face, and sometimes sideways, defiantly challenging all observers to doubt its Pelasgic origin. In fact, it was a tolerably good English nose, that could snort like a war-horse, if need were, but generally preserved a gentlemanly peace. As for the mouth, it was a problem. The ill-disposed suggested that it was made on purpose to show some very white strong teeth—teeth to make sheep tremble in their very wool, and resolve to grow tender. But others, less malicious and less hasty, pondered the matter long, and decided, first, that it was admirably adapted to let the voice out—so much of voice as there was—and to let it out in spite of his teeth ; secondly, that it was an elastic mouth—very pliable, as it ought to be, for it had a deal of smiling to get through—a very bland and benevolent organ altogether ; but the limner must not leave out “Cromwell’s wart.” And we must say, with regard to this mouth, we had a doubt whether its sweetness was (not sincere—we had no doubt on that head) spontaneous or constrained ; and after much musing, we concluded that the natural temper was curt, and warm, and seasoned with pride, as mustard might be with pickles, but that, by the application of high-toned principle, unwearied self-watching and self-restraint, together with cherished Christian influences—this all-but-complete man had put his temper in the hold of his ship, and battened all the hatches down, and then confidently painted the outsides very charmingly. In one word, it was “suavity.” All eyes turned to him with interest, for all knew him by name at least, and many by his works knew him better ; for he had lectured far

and wide—such lectures as tend gravely to improve, to stimulate, and refine the rusty and slothful mind. He had taken many chairs ; and some ardent “ Friends ” said that he was going to Parliament soon, and that he would be made Speaker—only think of that ! Then, if he had lectured much, he had written more—political and social, religious and teetotal ; all themes that bear on human welfare had occupied his pen by turns, and though some—many there were—could not go all the way with him, they could not grapple with his logic and his provoking facts, but felt like the man with a colocynth pill in his teeth—who could neither swallow it nor spit it out. They very much doubted their own position, and, though they stayed where they were, they gave him, personally, the benefit of their doubt. The very poor, perhaps, did not feel much drawn out towards him, for he was not very conspicuous in the giving line—perhaps he couldn’t afford ; but, if he kept his money, he gave plentifully of money’s worth ; for there were many there married and settled away from their native town, who knew well every feature of his face, and heard again with pleasure every tone of that voice which in the school-class had counselled them availingly for this life, and meetened their young hearts for the life to come.

Such was the gentleman, Mr. Talbot, who occupied the chair ; and there was not one of the very free observations of the company but might, at any rate, be construed into a compliment. He was welcomed with applause unanimous and hearty, though prompted doubtless by very various views of his character and life. His smile seemed to reflect itself in a thousand eyes, and the teetotallers looked round as much as to say, “ He is one of us ; so you may judge what we are ; ” and the brewer’s men at the far end, near the door—who hadn’t been to tea, and who came to make a row—even they cheered lustily. For he was on their side (the yellow) in politics, and, for all his teetotal farrago, either he or some one akin to him had befriended the Licensed Victuallers’ Association, of which each brewer there hoped one day to become a distinguished member.

When the meeting had stamped their feet quite into a

glow (there was a mysterious draught travelling up and down amongst their legs, and the brewer's men wouldn't or couldn't have the door shut), they deigned to give over, and listen to their chairman's soft, clear, and swelling voice :—

"Friends of Home,—I accept your applause, as I believe it was offered, with sincere delight. In the welcome you have given me I read the earnest renewal of your own consecration to all that is elevating to man and fruitful of glory to God. I need not ask, Is it well with you? for from the peaceful and happy expression of most, if not all, I know that it is well with you; and that however you may have been tempted since last we met, you have always triumphed, and you now harbour in your thoughts not only a strengthened confidence in your principles, but thankfulness to the Most High that ever you were won to their adoption, and a noble desire to extend the better part you have chosen, to the sons and daughters of misery around you. Let me urge you—but I think you do not need it—to behave with seemly consistency in the watchful eye of the doubting and the hostile. Let the principle of temperance pervade all your intercourse with each other, and with them that are, unhappily, still without. Let no vaunt, no rude rebuke, no cruel sarcasm, no untimely meddling, spoil you; as advocates in the cause of mercy. Suffer not your sobriety and self-denial to confine itself to the matter of drink; but remember that temperance has restored to you the reins of self-government, self-instruction, self-advancement. Remember that your former life has left a grievous legacy of irritation and evil habits and coarse speech, as well as ignorance and many weaknesses, and that you will need all watchfulness and charity for others, and diligent, perhaps painful effort, to make you all that should be covered by the name you bear—'The Friends of Home,' the friends of man. If the altar fire which blazed so brightly, and threw out sweet odours when first you formed a home, has gone nearly out, oh, feed it with all kindly thoughts and generous deeds, and shelter it with excuse for those who love you, with gentleness and a man's forbearance; and in no great while it shall rise up more beautiful, more steadily heavenwards; and you shall find abundant genial warmth when most you need it, in the chill winter of your life.

"May I further discharge my conscience, and testify the largeness of my desires for you, by reminding you that even here duty is but half done, love is but half developed and employed, and you shut out far more than half of all the comfort and the strength provided for you, if you forget the claims of God and his unutterable love for you and yours, or, if the re-opened paradise of bliss shares no thought and attracts no step of yours.

"I would that I could speak to others as my deep grief in their behalf would prompt me; for I am grieved and cut to the heart when I remember how God has guided my own steps for seventeen years in the

paths of pleasantness and peace ; or when I count up the gain unspeakable which some here have found from temperance ; and then think of my neighbour and my friend—the pauper and the workman—for who is my neighbour but the very poor, and who my friend if not the man who toils to clothe and feed me?—to know that they are feeding on the wind, sowing to the wind, and reaping ever and only whirlwind, pushing aside, in sullenness and the peevishness of suffering, the only medicines that either heal or soothe. Oh, my brother, I know not the pains of hell which the drunkard feels, but I have read their fierceness in the harrowed, haggard countenance of others, and I have trembled even in thanksgiving. I would save you from this, and from worse, from the ruin of the glorious mind which God has given to you all, and from the second death. I do know the sweets of temperance ; I do know how in a frame, feeble and frail, as from my birth-hour mine has been, the pulse of health may beat with calm but ever-growing force. I do know the lightheartedness of the sober life. I do know the secret pleasure of self-culture—the culture of the mind and heart—the one great task of earthly life—the final aim of all that God has done—and I well know too the magic of the name of home, whence bitterness, and wrath, and evil speaking are all driven out, and in their stead the spirit and the voice that love, and trust, and help, and bear and pray ; children who mingle no reproaches in their look of love ; a wife who never did reproach, who says she never needed to reproach, who would not have done it harshly, even though I had drunk her to a beggar's grave ; and I know my Redeemer, in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. And this well know I, that if I touched the very rags of that leprosy which you hug to your own sure hurt, all these springs of comfort would vanish ; the very heaven would be as brass, and the track of life would be as rough iron beneath my wounded unsandaled feet. I am not rich, as men judge ; but if I had all wealth, I would spurn it as the dust if it tempted me, and threatened to rob me of one hour of my present joy. Be wise then, loiterers, halters between two opinions ; come boldly, and now, to the lottery, where every ticket gains a costly prize. Come from the mass of the unheeded mob, and buy your franchise with the price you have long paid to have your chains and ignominy made fast upon your neck. Be each one a citizen of Britian, a well-to-do, saving, thrifty, rising citizen. Shed your poverty ; put on the apparel that befits a freeman of the old proud country, England—for with all her faults, the greatest and most infamous of which you help to make, England is worthy of your pride, if you will only sacrifice your pottage to obtain your birth right ; and if you still be far from wealthy, remember and imitate the boast of one who said ‘ I would rather be a rich man's dog in England than a poor *man* anywhere else.’ ”

* The Speeches reprinted from the “Arlton Journal.”

CHAPTER V.

PHASES OF EXPERIENCE.

THE genial voice was hushed, but its spell rested on the crowd. No boisterous, clamorous *hurrahs*; but a murmur, as from subdued and thoughtful minds, and the cheers of approbation were just late enough and loud enough to drown the first few sentences of the report which the amiable Secretary read in a flurry. It was mainly financial; and as it seemed to be very satisfactory to the chairman, who hob-a-nobbed to keep time with the bowing reader, we may judge that it was all that we could have wished if we had been privileged to hear its details. More distinctly, however, the voice was heard announcing with a great degree of feeling, that Abraham Tinker, a reformed drunkard, would now address the meeting. There was a short interval, and those who did not know Abraham were framing to themselves miniatures of fancy, in which greatly predominated a pair of red sore eyes, a couple of wan, wasted cheeks, relieved by a pendulous purple nose, and shaded now and then by another couple of thin, shaky, crooked hands. But attention was painfully arrested by the ghost-like appearance of a man, cadaverous indeed, and, judging from his cough that sounded like "earth to earth" and "dust to dust," very far gone in decline; but placid and sweet, and full of that life which no consumption wastes, and the grave cannot hold. He was dressed in black, and yet he was known as a common mechanic. His eye was all intelligence and fire; it might be because he was drawing nearer to the Fountain Head of all intelligence and all life; for it was known that he was poor, and ignorant, and could hardly spell the truth he so much loved, from the page of Holy Writ. His speech was brief, and to the point.

"The doctor said I must not come. I came; I could not stay away, for I knew it would be the last time for me. The doctor said I munna speak. I have opened my mouth, and I will speak one word or two, for I canna hould my tongue. You look at me, you great fat men down there, and think, 'Well, if that's teetotal, give me beer.' But all that's

wrong. I will not say that beer made me waste and die; but I know right well it gave me many a shove down to death. I was born a wastrel, so they tell me; but they need na tell me, for I know it all now, that I might have lived and been strongish for years if I had not drunk at all. If I had not come here three years ago, and the doctor told me then I mustn't, I should have been in hell twelve months ago, and now, if I do die, it's all as one when,—I am ready, are you? No thanks to me; but to my faithful curate, who has cured my soul. Thanks to the good, good God that taught him how to do it. I have been a drunkard, and when I say this to a lot of moderates, I don't feel in a mind to blush; for, says I to myself, We are all going one road, all on the down line. I go express; they are cosy old fogies, and go parliamentary; but if I get to the end to-night, they may stop at every station if they like, but they'll not be a long way behind to-morrow.—I am a reformed drunkard, blessed be God! Oh, my God, who would live a drunkard's sad bad life! Oh, my God, who would die a drunkard's death!"

But here the feeble candidate for heaven was made to feel that God had saved him from so horrible a fate, for he knew that he was dying now; and, faint and trembling, he gave place, and leaning on the arm that should have leaned on his, he went slowly home.

Another speaker was introduced to illustrate, as the Secretary said, another view of the one grand important principle. He was burly and muscular; but he squinted, and never combed his hair except with his nails, and was altogether too ruddy and full of animal health to do anything but eat, and plough, and sleep—but he was a show, a sort of great over-grown prize baby, who could not speak, but could display his parts in such a way as to constitute a very powerful argument to the mind of the weazel-shaped short-winded weaver, who wondered how much a week the man had to keep all that flesh on his bones. He duly said, "Fayther used to have the gout, and he did so sweet and cuss and groan like, that one day he says, says he, 'Bill, never drink, lad, or thou'lt have gout as sure as th' art born—it runs i'th' blood.' And Oi never hev drunk, nor never mean to. Your humble servant, Bill Timmins:" and making a national-school bow in his best style, he went whence he came—through a trap-door in the platform. Then the chairman rose—like the sun, straight up—and with equal

cordiality and ceremony announced the esteemed curate of the ever-absent rector of the parish. The Rev. Henry Wilton was, in appearance, dress, and manner, just a gentleman. Not a pennyworth of starch either in his character or in his stock more than was comely and needful, and very little of what is now a days supposed to constitute an able clergyman—we mean *waistcoat*. From his joyous, candid face, you would hardly have guessed the profound piety of his enlightened mind, and the deep tenderness of heart which no unkindness, or folly, or even vice and infidelity could exhaust. His rector didn't live in those parts, so that Henry Wilton had very much of his own way,—except with the money he earned for his master—and a very good way most people thought it. One drawback he had—though he did not feel quite sure whether to regard it so or not—he could not make a platform speech. His reading of the Church offices was pathetic and sublime, and his neat little sermons were as eloquent and fluent as they were full of feeling and truth; again, in his unwearied ministry to the sick, the bereaved, the dying, he found the words of solace and of guidance readily and without effort; but, as he truly said, he could not make speeches. He said, after a few excuses and apologies:—

“I am a tried upholder of the principles you profess, and I pray God I may never be induced to lay them aside; for, if I do, I know I may as well lay down the shepherd's crook which I love to bear. I would, however, respectfully and kindly urge you not to rest in the advantages which temperance gives for this world, but go on to possess the whole land—I ask you with great plainness, come to church: if you say, We go to chapel, good: but if you have not that excuse, I insist upon it, for your souls' sake, come to church. It won't save you, I know, neither will coming here to-night make a drunkard a teetotalter; but, both in the one case and in the other, it is the likeliest thing to do. I will do my best for you—it is not much, I know—but I am wholly yours; I go from this place to tend two dying beds, for I feel assured that one has gone out from us who will lie down to rise no more, and though he needs me not, he loves me as I him, for a common Saviour's sake; and I am summoned to another scene, not unlike, but yet more interesting, and, to me, more painful. The hours of your beloved founder are already numbered, and he is going fast to give account of you—you all—to God. I shall, if God prolongs my life, stand by the bed of many here when death comes.

What shall I have to say to you? I do not know; but this I tell you as a warning, that after all my experience, and notwithstanding the glorious fulness of the gospel for all who have sinned, I do not know, I have not yet found out, in what possible way I can bring any solid peace or comfort to the death of a drunken man. I pray God to teach me such words of comfort, if there be such, before some of you die: for, by all I see and hear, you will many of you greatly need them. But I must pause here, duty calls me away; I go to learn rather than to teach, to rejoice more than to weep. I wish you all good night, and the 'Friends of Home' God speed."

On the retirement of the worthy clergyman, the chairman rose as if to speak, and, with the permission of the audience, he offered a few supplementary remarks of a practical nature:—

"I omitted in my opening address a matter which I think of considerable, though not of paramount importance,—I refer to the habit and comfort of saving money which temperance induces. I would not for the world awaken in your bosoms the spirit of covetousness, which is idolatry, and of avarice, which is only less to be shunned than riotous living; but, at the same time, I hold it to be at best a piece of cant to run down the value of money, and absolute wickedness to discourage men from saving and increasing their worldly substance. Money will not unlock heaven's gate, neither will it necessarily secure for its possessors reputation, and respectability, and happiness; but most assuredly that money, be it much or little, which is accumulated by habitual self-denial, will go far to secure exemption from the ills of mortality, and to promote rational self-respect, as well as the good opinion of others for the man who is known to possess it. It is but a drunkard's dream that fills you with envy and hatred of the rich; awake from that dream, replace envy by ambition, and let resolve and perseverance dislodge sick fancies from your mind. It is not given to all men to amass great riches; but it is in the power of nearly all to say, 'What though my wages be scanty, when bread is reasonable, I can live and *save*, not much, but something; and I have *property* just as truly as the squire; as to how much, it's no business of his, and comparisons are odious.'—I feel sure that many amongst you must have wondered, and, I suspect, envied old Judson, the well-fed, hard-working, and meanly-clad pedlar, when you heard that he had died worth £6000; but what is the use of gossiping and wondering, or of envying either? Would it not be wiser to bethink yourselves, that this man was a workhouse boy, that he was taught no trade, which to you is almost as good as a large capital; that he was exposed to far severer privations than you have known; that he had no friends to bid him be of good heart, and to help him in his early way; that he cherished as a talisman of good fortune, to the last day of his death, the first sixpence he ever possessed, and on his bed of death, gave it, with his

blessing and his counsel and £6000 to his only remaining son? Try to recall the time when you met him in a public-house, unless it was just inside the door? Try, with less effort and better success, to remember him as he trudged by your side in the green hilly lanes of your county, sweating with his burden, but still chaffing and offering to trade, or winning his way to your heart, and thus to your purse, by sage counsels on his favourite theme, 'How to make Money', or gay stories of his own narrow but varied life; or the faltering voice which recited for your warning tales of poverty and shame that touched and wrung your heart. Had he indeed the long-sought secret? Could he change the flints to gold? Had he *any* secret which must be hid from you? Did he dream of all those bags of gold, and dig them at his leisure from their hiding-place? No, my friends, he began far lower down than any of you; but he placed the ladder firmly—when he put that sixpence safely by, and fasted till he got another; and he climbed with weariness, and yet with inward pleasure, round by round, until at last his strength and wisdom helped him up two steps at once. He knew no theories of total abstinence, but he felt its value, and many a time, when coaxed by beaming landlady to step in and take a little, 'just to warm him,' has he said, 'And wha'd be the fuil then, cannie body; bawbees is not blackberries, and I maun win on to the toon, for that deil Bauldry is sax mile a-head.'—He has gone. I know no more of him, I do not ask how far his money was a blessing to him; but I know it will be a blessing to the town in which you live, for his blessing has indeed fallen with his money to an active and generous man; and remember, not for your discouragement, but to moderate your expectations and teach you patience, that he laboured fifty years for his £6000. Supposing any of you, at the age of 21, is earning and spending £1 a week; that out of that, 4d. a day goes for beer, and an extra half-crown on Saturday night; then suppose you signed the pledge to-night—in the first place, you may take my word for it, that in a very few weeks you would earn more money, say 2s. 6d. a week advance; in the second place, make no change in your mode of life except such as will promote your health and love of home,—and, apart from accident or sickness (which of course would be a much lighter thing to you than if you had continued drinking), when you die in hale old age, such as Scripture almost promises to the sober man, your account, your money account, of life will stand thus (I will not reckon the most probable increase in your wages—I will not suppose any unusually profitable investment): you would leave behind you considerably above £2000. Or, if you are ambitious of owning a few cottages, you might, at the age of 50, possess half-a-dozen freehold houses, which would bring you in 50 guineas a year; or, in other words, enable you to leave off work and be a gentlemen without any diminution of the comforts previously supplied by hard work."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW EXPERIENCE.

"HURRAH! hurrah!" burst forth from some stentorian listener, "that's the ticket for me. Let me go; I'll sign the pledge, if nobody else will—fifty guineas a year—I'm your man;" and in fewer seconds than it takes words to tell, there leaped upon the central table in a right line with the chairman's nose, a stout, curly-headed youth, in a state of the wildest excitement—Jamie Simpson. Envious girls whispered ill-naturedly, so as to let Polly hear, "I declare if he isn't drunk—poor Polly!" "It's a lie! and you know it, you nasty spiteful thing!" was the retort of Jamie's lovely champion. But little did the chairman or the new convert calculate on the tempest and the combat which that clinching argument was about to stir up. Jamie was, in his way, a choice spirit, and though not a sot, he was the boon companion of many who were; he was a judge of beer, and he dealt leniently with publicans by virtue of a private understanding when the beer happened to be just a little thundered—and the brewer's men had only last night almost broken his back ribs with their hearty congratulations on his pluck, when he told them he'd some thoughts of keeping a public himself as soon as he'd got fairly wed. He had viewed with philosophical indifference the falling away from good fellowship of many of his companions; for he knew, so he said, it wouldn't last long. Truth will tell though, that he felt as if a mine had been sprung very near his feet indeed, when, not from mere rumour, but from his own lips, he heard of Drum's conversion, and he felt disposed to taunt the little drummer about how much he'd got for it, and then souse him in the water-butt, but he didn't; and this day seemed to have been marked out of all days in the calendar for his special annoyance of conscience; first in the gardens, and then in the prosy old gentleman's harangues, and now at the meeting—and, finally, for his particular deliverance out of the snares of the fowler.

Loud cries of joy, too intense for any other form of expression but that of bawling, hailed the approach of the new recruit, and as he paced along the centre of the three planks of which the tables were constructed, even the ladies gave no heed to the dirty marks of his hob-nailed boots, and energetically flipped with their pocket-handkerchiefs at his corduroy trowsers. But the return of this prodigal was not destined to be a continuous ovation; the way of escape, indeed, was clear, but he didn't run as he ought to have done—he was uplifted in his heart, and the intoxication of applause was soothing to his nerves. And yet there were swift and desperate foes in his rear. Bully Kilderkin, the mashing man at the great brewhouse, beheld this spectacle at first with inconceivable dismay—he was utterly stunned; but reviving consciousness rendered him open to such practical suggestions as "Fetch him back, Bully, fetch him back. Bring him off, Bully, and we'll bottle him till he gets his senses;" and it needed no special urgency to press Bully into this, as he thought, patriotic service. He was grieved as well as shocked—he "couldn't never have thought it of Jim—he was sure he wasn't right in his head—he'd have him down, by the Lord, he would, in a jiffy;" and with one bound, like a barrel that has broken loose from the drags, he rolled on to the table in the wake of the unsuspecting novice, crunching and rattling the boards as he went—like Neptune, the earth-shaker of old, friends and foes greeting him at every step with salutations of which he took no heed, as "Go it, Billy; give it the white-haired spooney;" or, "You be off with you, it's none o' your concern." One moment more, and his victim would have been in his embrace. The pretty frightened lasses caught hold of his gaiters to hold him back from the fell purpose of his soul, but he shook them off like flies, and trod upon their fingers till they screamed. But victory, like a hovering eagle, wavered in mid-air, if anybody could have seen it; it once nearly alighted on his head, but just at that precise moment, a combined movement of a relieving party took him in the flank, and as if he had been felled like an ox, he lay supine, in the very moment of victory, biting the dust, and over-

whelmed by the interlaced and struggling arms and legs of every member of the band. New confusion soon broke out ; there were at least 300 stalwart drinkers there who would not tamely see their chieftain fall ; and his fellow-chiefs, his staff, his should-be body-guard, were they remiss ? By no means ; but as they could not get either at him or at his immediate foes, they scattered themselves like wolves among a flock, and kicked and elbowed and stamped upon every luckless individual that looked as if he didn't drink. What might have been the issue, whether as fatal as it was already sanguinary, we cannot say, for when the tumult was at its height, the clarionet man availed himself of a breathing space to shout at the top of his voice, " Mr. Chairman—order—please sir, the brewer's mens' master is at the back of the platform ; ask him if he ain't ashamed of his goings on ?"—This gentleman, who was short-sighted, and, as was likely enough in the circumstances, right back on the platform, near the judge's door, could not resist the appeal which was thus addressed to him point-blank, and advancing to the front, he said, in a loud and stern voice, that " If the men in his employ did not instantly cease from taking part in the disturbance, he would dismiss the pack of them to-morrow morning, even if he shut up his place"—having said this, he presented a cheque for ten pounds to the chairman for the funds of a Society which sought to raise the working class ; for he was, you must know, what is called an *eminent* brewer (it sounds funny rather, but it means), one who got all his money by degrading his fellow men, and gave away a good deal to raise them up again. As soon as his threat was understood, his men yielded with a bad grace to the hardship of defeat ; and of course there was acclamation in the victors' camp, while the draymen and others, with the mashing man to the front, sulkily abandoned the field and the hall together, and repaired to the back tap of the " Justice's Wig," to concert private reprisals on the unfortunate clarionet man as he came out of the meeting.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FACT.

ORDER was at length restored, and it was amidst the solemn silence into which the uproarious exultation of the band had subsided, that Jamie signed his name in full, in large round hand, to the pledge of abstinence. It seemed as if the meeting were now about to close, and not a few, shaken by the fright they had just had, hoped that it would. None seemed willing to speak, and none were anxious to hear; but in the meeting, at the lower end, a singular being rose at once to observation and to speak. He inquired of the chairman whether that was a meeting of free-born Englishmen, and if so, was any one free to ask a question? "Yes, certainly," was the reply, "so that the question be to the point." The inquirer was an elderly and lank man, with both shoulders much above the military level, and one shoulder much above the level of the other. His long, thin grey hair environed a face that was peculiarly fierce and dogmatic in its expression, and an air of study and philosophy was imparted to the entire man by a well-slung pair of tortoise-shell spectacles. Nobody knew who he was, and he didn't appear anxious to tell.

"He wished to observe, then," he said, "that he was a rational being, and would listen to reason—that he was not one of those who were led by the nose, that is, by their feelings; but he was of a scientific turn, and very fond of logic and chemistry, and that sort of thing, and he only wished he knew something about them, but he didn't. Still he thought he had a right, on an occasion so serious as the present, to ask the chairman one question, and that was, Was not alcohol found in the human body, and in nature generally; and if so, was it not sheer blasphemy to sign the pledge?—He hoped he was as open to conviction as another; but again he would protest against being led by the nose. The grounds on which he had wrought out his own opinions on this question (which opinion nothing that might be said could ever change) were the most authoritative and sacred that

could be presented to the mind of man. He didn't mean the Bible. He thought he was rather too old a bird to be caught by that kind of thing,—but he meant the assertion of a deceased mother, who, years ago, assured him that her mother had made treacle out of potatoes, and she, his mother, pursuing the discovery, had succeeded in extracting rum from that treacle to that extent that it had made her beastly drunk. Now, sir, I want to know what you can say to that fact? 'Facts are stubborn things.'"

The chairman replied :—

"That he was quite willing to regard the rather solemn testimony of the inquirer to the interesting matter of fact related, as valid, and also to accept it as another added to the many proofs already existing, that alcohol is very extensively found in the human body ; but he imagined that in all likelihood the majority of cases would show that the human body had put the alcohol into itself. As to the general question, whether alcohol existed in nature, apart from the various kinds of fermentation, he could only say, that there was at length some little doubt ; for those French chemists never let any firm belief rest long together without discovering something that threatened to overturn it ; but he felt disposed to rest the question on the horns of this dilemma (the gentleman likes logic). Either alcohol is found in the human system naturally, or it isn't. If the latter be the case, he concluded that the Creator saw no vital necessity for it : if the former, then, doubtless, there was no occasion for man to trouble himself, and risk his salvation for the purpose of putting it there."

The fierce man snappishly declared that he was satisfied—"perfectly satisfied," he said, with a grim sneer, "satisfied that the whole thing was humbug, and that they were a lot of Jesuits, conspiring to fetter and prostrate the natural reason of the human race!" and he sank down, perspiring greatly, and universally cut by all the "Friends of Home" for ten yards round. His scholarly pretensions, however, exerted an influence in the inverse ratio of distance ; and at the other tables, where they could not discern his greasy coat and dirty hands and very virile beard, there was

evidently an amount of respect for his sagacious scepticism which might prove dangerous if it were not counteracted, so that many of the sincerer members were desirous of having at least one more speech, a good rouser on the side of "the Friends." The chairman felt the pulse of the meeting, and then said—which no doubt was to a great degree perfectly true—that he had great pleasure in calling on the Reverend Hyson Green, the Baptist minister, to wind up the proceedings of the evening; but whether the chairman's pleasure arose from the prospect of hearing the young orator, or the certainty of its being the last speech, however long or however dry,—we must leave to the recollections of his own bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REV. HYSON GREEN.

Now this minister was young to look at; but report said he was wiser than he looked, and could double up infidels in no time. However that may have been, we can testify thus much, that he looked a great deal more like a thorough-going clerical than Mr. Wilton—only clergymen, we have observed, don't often wear spectacles, and much more rarely do they sport imperials. It is of no use affecting concealment, and so we state, once for all, that he had looked forward to this meeting with no little trepidation,—his more uncouth advisers pointing out the desirableness, on political and vestry grounds, of "cutting out the curate," and, though he despised the motive, he had sat up all the night before to accomplish this end. He came languidly to the front, and tried to look as if he had nothing to say; but he was far too honourable to begin his speech, as so many do, with a flat lie; and so with faint and trembling voice, he began at the top of the page which was at that moment shaking audibly in his coat-tail pocket, and never stopped till he had got to the last word there:—

"I have said it often, for I have often heard it said, that the speeches of teetotallers are remarkable for their egotism: but as I view it now,

this, instead of being a reproach, is a trait beyond all praise; for it is consistent, and it is adapted to the highest usefulness. To deal in general sentiments is not the business of those who seek to wedge truth fast into the convictions of mankind. To retail anecdotes from one platform to another is to rob men of that force which they wish themselves to use, and which is diminished more than half when wielded at second hand. In my own profession, experience is indeed permitted to bear witness, but not prominently, and certainly not solely. We have a fact, a doctrine, a revelation, a message, a mystery, to announce and enforce; but in this matter of abstinence, we lack the direct commission and the specific command. Resting in part on the broad sanction of the Bible, we derive our main argument from the 'red-leaved volume of the heart,' whereon written are histories of sorrow and shame, penned by our own and others' faults. Therefore do I speak of myself to you, and if God has gifted you with utterance, I beseech you speak of yourselves to me. We live and move together. I cannot, as once I wished and dreamed, turn aside from the crowded banks of the stream of life, and wend my solitary way; neither yet can you fulfil all duty and taste all joy, unless you often tarry by a stranger's well, and drink at his homestead gate. From my heart, then, I would fain bring forth the store of wisdom, gathered in the home of pain, gathered like the mystic herbs of healing in the midnight hours of life—wisdom that brings no glory, but spends its sweetness on the conscience and on the wounded spirit. I take my stand neither as a reformed drunkard, nor as a teetotaler of ripe experience, and yet I could say much in both characters: as for the ripe experience, mine has been of tropic growth, and I deem it an instance of love at first sight. I feel as little misgiving on the matter of its benefit as I should if Baron Rothschild were to make his will in my favour and die to-night. I feel all the surprise, but at the same time, a great deal of the security and triumph which hereafter I hope to realize, when the gates of glory close, to find myself on the right side. If you will only wait, you shall have the experience ripe enough in age. I cannot wait, I need not, for I am living on the fruit already. Then as to the other side, the desert I have left, its parching, shelterless, springless, treeless, shifting, blinding, fatal sands,—of this, too, I can speak, though I am spared to heap stone on stone, as a memorial in the promised land. I speak with shame—but for years I was estranged from the cause of temperance, as too many, alas! affect to be distrustful of religion—through the violence and unseemliness of many of its professors. I was wounded in later years in that sensitive part (wherever that may be) in which professional honour and Christian zeal dwell together in unity, by the troubles of temperance professors of the gospel, and at all times too easily sheltering my self-indulgence under the example of the elders and fathers, and their ingenious arguments of force against temperance claims. All reverence and filial love to the fathers in Israel; but away with the excuses which the youths pretend to derive from them.

"They bear in unsullied honour the beliefs in which they were nurtured, and their abounding fervour, enkindled from the living coal, has ever borne them onward with a glorious success in the one thing they were sent to do. In their youth, and even in their prime, the evils of moderate drinking were not felt, or not numbered amongst the foremost of the ranks of sin. But all is changed now. As men, year after year, will innocently drink Thames water, and pooh-pooh all mere occasional muddiness as of no consequence; but when they have seen the truth, the hideous truth, in the monsters which crawl and scrimmage in the light of the oxyhydrogen microscope, resolve that they will drink no more,—so is it with the whole age in which we are living. A generation ago, men looked with complacency on the practice of moderate drinking; but now that complacency gives place to shuddering horror, for God has opened up to our view the valley of bones and death that lay neglected at our feet; and in the flickering, panting life of infancy—in the greasy raggedness of thievish youth—in the pining feebleness and cruel-heartedness of wifehood—in the vile brutality, and cowardice, and sloth, and pauperism, and crime of manhood—in the pestilential alleys, in the teeming prisons,—God has stretched out before our aching gaze a picture that breathes scorching flames—a picture of the fearful truth that drink is death. This black death rages in our midst—its symptoms, early and late, are all marked and known—its immense mortality is registered, and shall we, with open eyes, put on the garments of the plague-slain—tamper with noisome miasmata—hope to live and thrive in it, when God has shown us the spotted, bloated corpse, and marked with his dread red cross the doors that lead down to hell? O no! out and away from the city that is doomed—away from its borders, far, far away in the sweet bracing fields of safe and peaceful sobriety. But I must speak of myself. If, in the green tree of health and fresh aridour, I did thus, what should I do in the dry? The thought fell like lead not seldom on my soul, as I saw the young and old, so fair or so strong, crushed, like the moth, with losses of money, or of children, or of wife, and falling like stars, almost too swift to trace, all too swift to save. Stern self-questioning came when I stood by the side of the recovering penitent, more generous, more learned, more useful, more beloved than I could ever hope to be,—sterner self-reproach stung me as again I stood to see the lapsed one die. What am, I that I should stand where such an one has fallen?

"The flood had swollen round us both. I stood upon an island fair, and for a moment safe, and as he swept past I called him, *oh, how beseechingly*, to come and stand with me. But he knew it was not safe. He had often taken refuge there, and ever as he came the flood rose higher, loosed the soil beneath his feet, and bore him slowly off into the boiling depth. Why did I not climb the towering rock and bid him follow where the angry and treacherous flood could never come? And yet I did not climb, and yet I hardly dared to cry to others as they swept toiling by. Was it madness? I was not mad, *alms*—was it.

hardness of heart? Now God forbid. By what name shall I call the fool-hardiness that despises warnings, direful beyond all others? It was the sin of bribed and wilful ignorance. I know not yet all the danger of the insidious habit. I was not old enough to believe its power. My soul was lifted up with buoyant purpose and world-embracing love. I dreamed of bliss untainted, of success unclouded, of the waiting crown of glory. No toil, no prayer, no speech too earnest, too exhausting to win that crown. But I would not take my cross. Shall I, can I tell you the peculiar temptation of a life like mine? Not to speak of that plain and potent danger which springs from the indulgent love of people to their pastor, and from the frequency of social intercourse; let me draw the veil from the inner life. One thought must reign high above all thoughts, one purpose direct all reverie and all study, and all action. The whole life hangs upon the work of glorifying God and saving men. If fear and unbelief steal in upon that central thought, the whole citadel is surprised and confused, and open to assault. And mark how much there is in the progress of that life-work to induce the fatal spirit of distrust. A Word to which we have surrendered our own homage and all our hopes, to which we have set our seal, pledging all to its verity and to its power too; that Word becomes a rusty sword, jagged, and blunt, and useless. The amiable, the wise, the tender-hearted, the virtuous, and with them the broken-hearted, and the simple, the ignorant, the vicious, the condemned, lingering hopelessly by the grave side, or sinking fast into its gloom, or leaping wildly into hell, all alike hear that Word unmoved. Hath God bereft his Word of its olden power, hath God given me for a solemn charge till judgment, a people that shall perish? Or, still more painful thought, has he hidden his face from me? I say, that the dismal misgivings of the preacher lead him to seek excitement for the service of the Lord. The sanctity of God's pure house drives the devil's coarser trials of his faith away. He dare not (few dare) call God to hear his supplication with polluted breath. But on the morrow of a sleepless Sabbath night, when the retrospect, all waste though it be, must be viewed, then leanness enters into the soul, the soul is cold and hungry, the Word which he prayed might melt all other hearts, now hardly shines upon his own.

"Like a forsaken sick man who drags himself in the darkened chamber, groping vainly for the soothing draught, he too, seeks painfully but wrongly for a healing balm, and instead of fighting out the demon that would suck the marrow of his faith, he yields, and shrinks, and grows indifferent, or despairs. Then each petty trouble of his common life, public or private, exerts a tenfold influence on his temper and his nerves. Restless, irritable, idle, wandering in his studious hours, and sickening over all that most concerns him, because for a season the lively relish has failed, entangled in business which has no charm in it apart from the injured faith within, but which, to a steadfastly believing mind, would be all simplicity and pure delight; all this and much more that may not be lightly told, strand him on a shore where

all around the wreckers of this demon foe stand ready to break him up for ever. And foremost of that bloody band, I see the demon Drink. How red and glaring is his fiery eye, and yet he fascinates :—‘ Help, Lord, or thy servant perisheth.’

“ Shall I change the view ? To some I bring darker ; but to me no views can ever be so pitchy black as those in which the soul wrestles alone with its woe. I have known the strange variety of human ills, for the teacher sent from God must, like the Great One, obey every wail of pain and want as though it were a voice from Heaven, and often in the stifling typhous air of the very death-chamber, may he meet all human woes at once. Bleak poverty that bade the father die, then wrapped its rags around the little heirs, and bade them live and suffer. The sickening that told of other deaths at hand ; the aged blind and lame, the complaining, the harsh, the rude, the cruel, the loathsome, the revolting, all in one, but all servitors in the train of death. I would not compare my griefs with such as these, but I gain no help, no power to endure from spectacles so heartrending. I know the sorrows of an empty basket and an exhausted store ; a purse laid aside as useless,—sickness all but unto death,—dejection all but madness,—weeks all but sleepless, and terrible debt without, like the shadow of a dun all round the house. ‘ What should I do in the dry ? ’ I asked long before. Say, O wife, and prattle, ye little ones, what shall I do ? Drink ! drink on ! drink more ! No ; as much as I have done has been evil and not good, and if I dare now, in my utmost weakness, parley with the power of darkness, will he not mock me, overcast me, enchain me, and deliver me up bound hand and foot to the tormentors ? No, I will arise and do battle with the fiend.’—I arose ; it was enough ; he fled howling ; and it sounded like ‘ Adieu ! henceforth, God be with you ; ’ and from that hour I bear a charmed life ; outward change there may have been, but it is slight, for I feel the strength of manhood and the help of God, and the weights which pressed me down and bruised me sorely, I now toss like toys into the air. The evil spirit has gone out, I fain hope, but I fear not to desert-places. The house of my love and faith has been swept and garnished, and he and his seven fellow-devils may knock at the door for ever. Give me joy, then, you who know how blessed is the freedom I have gained ; let me lead you who know it not, to try joy like mine. I sincerely wish you, and predict for you great success, and it shall be mine to help. I have heard it remarked by our venerable friend and founder, that it would be a matter of unspeakable satisfaction, if the constitution of this Society were decidedly Christian. I will neither deny, nor discuss this point, but the remark suggested to my mind a curious truth which it will be well for both enemies and friends to ponder. If you wish teetotalism to spread, to become universal, you must infuse one portion of Christian principle into your operations, even if you do not accept the supreme authority of the Gospel in your Society. You will need the *enlarged benevolence* which the Gospel alone describes and inculcates, for this reason,—mark and remember it, friends and foes alike ! The immediate

worldly and personal advantages which teetotalism gives to a man over his moderate neighbour are so solid, that if he were merely a worldly wise man he would do everything to discourage his neighbour from taking the pledge. He would be disposed to say, 'I won't let him know wherein we differ, I won't bid him fish in my stream, I won't even leave my footmarks on the track to my rich mine, much less invite him to dig.'—Mark it well, I say again, the matured selfishness of men must be ruthlessly sacrificed in every instance in which a pledged abstainer seeks to persuade a brother to the same course. I know an American, who is, and has been for years, a stanch teetotaler, but when urged to subscribe a trifle from his vast hoards for the promotion of temperance, declares that he would as soon think of getting blind drunk as of giving sixpence to the cause: 'If the fools will drink, let 'em,' say I, 'all the better for we as don't; they're born niggers, and we drive.'"

CHAPTER IX.

TRUTH IS DOUBLE EDGED.

AT the close of this speech there were not a few of the choicer spirits present who were stung with the reflection that they were niggers, and who would fain have followed Jamie's example, and made a clean breast of it there and then; but the warning was too recent and too vivid, and they sat still with the fear before their mental vision that the brewer's men were not all gone, or very far off. The amiable Sec. then read a written proclamation to the effect that all who wished might sign the pledge outside the landing, and, further, that every one so signing, above the age of fourteen, should be entitled to a beautiful medal, price two-pence.

The chairman received very graciously a democratic informal acknowledgment of his services in the shape of a cheer that comprised all kinds of applause, and threatened to last nearly as long as the meeting had already done, and then he thanked them for the courteous demeanour which had characterized the whole proceedings, with the one solitary exception, which he trusted they would all forgive and forget ("No, we won't, though!" shouted a muffled and feigned voice that was distinctly traceable to the doomed clarionet-man in the corner); and now he wished to put it to the meeting,

whether they would conclude with the Old Hundreth, or God save the Queen. A show of hands was called. The band made no sign, for it was all one to them, they knew both the tunes well, or at least equally well. The Methodists won, as the sceptical man predicted, and long before the solemn strain was brought to a close the more active and suspicious of both sexes had transferred themselves to the original sphere in which we met them, the sphere of hats and pattens in the little magistrates' room, on the ground floor.

Miss Gibbins didn't change her wig, for she had become a prominent character by the stolid and resolute manner in which she had blocked up the door-way to sign the pledge, (good old soul ; she said she didn't do it for her own sake, but as an example to those who did need it,) and besides, it wasn't wet, and the moon seemed to have come out brighter than common to have a look at the "Friends of Home." The band endeavoured to nudge its way out in such fashion as to deserve its morning epithet of 'compact,' but they overdid the thing, and so got scattered, with the understanding, however, that they were to meet somewhere, but they had not fixed precisely where ; and when some dozen of their number did re-assemble, they were unnerved by the palpable fact that the clarionet-man was missing, and they had their own thoughts on the subject, but little did they know the tortures through which their too zealous confederate was at that moment working his way to the renown of martyrdom. But in very truth he had been kidnapped before their very eyes ; his hat had been cuffed down to his chin, and, thus blindfolded and smothered, he had been carried to the back-yard of the "Justice's Wig," pumped upon till he was soaked, and ignominiously kicked out into the rutty, swampy lane at the back of the tavern.

Two young hearts were light and cheery in that moon-light hour. Jamie and Polly felt inclined to skip and dance ; they did not exactly know why, but Jamie was excited by the idea of leaving off work when he was fifty, and having fifty guineas a year, and Polly was wondering what her mother would say when she told her that Jamie had signed the pledge ; and both had half an idea that it would not be so

long now as it might have been, but for Jamie's prudent decision. If such was their thought it must have been a little bird's whisper that brought it to them both, for at that very moment (for of course they were going the longest way home,) the benevolent heart of Miss Gibbins was easing itself in the little mill-house where the old people lived, by breaking the welcome news of Jamie's reform, and urging an immediate celebration of the wedding as the only thing to keep him to his word, so that when at length they lifted the latch, and Polly burst in with: "Father! Jamie's been and—O, lor', Miss Gibbins, is that you?" "Yes, my dear, and your father knows all." "Yes, my boy, I know all, and right glad I am to know it, too. I couldn't hinder you from having my Polly, I knew, but my heart was against it till this night. Take her for your own, Jamie, as soon as ye like, and mind ye keep your pledge, or ye'll break one heart here, if you dunna break Mary's." So it came to pass that the day which had been marked out of all days in the calendar for the annoyance of Jamie's conscience was the brightest and whitest day but one, in all his calendar of life. It is not always the wisest thing a man can do to kick against the pricks,—it's sometimes advisable, all things considered, to let them prick him till he bleeds, and good will come of the pain.

CHAPTER X.

WHO IS THIS?

THE multitude dispersed at length, we cannot say soberly in every sense of the word, for there was something riotous in their noisy departure, and not a few, as we have already intimated, repaired or dropped into the little tempting public-house at the corner, with anything but sober intentions.

We must follow to the threshold of their home, at least two, who, by-and-by are to claim our main attention, and we trust, deepest sympathy. A man whose stoop told of sorrows rather than age, and whose heavy wrappings and

ruffled throat told of present disease, and danger from the light air, and by his side a fair young sylph-like figure ripping in the moonbeams like a hunter in Diana's train. She had been at the meeting from the first, for she made tea next door to the secretary, and from her white hand did the miserable official receive unknown numbers of cups of tea. The companion had come to fetch her home, and she had found him standing on the steps. She gaily described to him what

rich scene he had missed, and dressed up the several speakers after the drollest fashion, to make what amends he could for all that he had lost. But it occurred to her that he must have been waiting, and perhaps he had heard at least some of the speaking; but even as she put the question, the short dry cough of her friend reminded her that she must not inhale the evening air. She became silent, and pressed the arm of her companion almost convulsively, as if to secure his pardon for the levity which she had shown, as if forgetting how much he had to make him sad.

During the speech of Mr. Wilton she had endeavoured to suppress all signs of her emotion by thinking of everything in the wide world except about what the speaker was saying, and had so far fallen in with the reprehensible and stupid folly of giggling girls on such occasions, as to laugh or try to laugh convulsively at a thread-bare nonentity called a joke, which was traceable, we believe, to the light haired young man in the corner, who, notwithstanding that he had given birth to such a laughter-moving sally, stood frowning in all the majesty of thoughts too grave and big for utterance, as though "he could, an he would," make a speech that would tear the veil of prejudice from every benighted mind, and the box off into the bargain. However, it was so far fortunate that the young lady missed the affecting allusion of Mr. Wilton to the approaching death of one to whom she was so dear, and who was so beloved by her. Who was her companion? Why was he silent? What sorrow or sickness bowed his tall form until he too leaned upon one who should have leaned on him? Time will tell.



BOOK II.

THE SECRET OF A LIFE.

Leon! Oh, thus she stood ;
Even with such life and majesty (warm life,
As now it coldly stands) when first I woo'd her !

To me comes a creature
Sometimes her head on one side, sometimes another,
I never saw a vessel of like sorrow,
So fill'd and so becoming—in pure white robes,
Like very sanctity, she did approach.

* * * * *

And, gasping to begin some speech, her eyes
Became two spouts, the fury spent anon.



Book Second.

THE SECRET OF A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS.

ON the last few sentences of the introductory book hangs a whole web of tried and redeemed life which we propose to display. The whole interest really centres on that feeble and stricken man. Human love, intensified by long years of agonizing fear, was watching, angel like, every tottering step of that man's career. From that deep love, that yearning anxiety to save an only child, had sprung the heroism which for more than twenty years had sustained the founder of that day's feast,—the friend of many homes, the counsellor and restorer of many wanderers from the peaceful path of virtue. The wounded love of that good man's heart had nurtured him to a life of active and sublime benevolence, instead of weaning him away to the verge of despair. All these glorious fruits—of which we have gathered a fair cluster ready, but the full vintage of which we shall witness only in heaven—had been yielded from the soil of a smitten heart, in which the fertilizing dews of a heavenly faith and love had constantly descended.

It was not generally known in the town of Arlton what manner of life Mr. Barton had led previous to his settlement in that neighbourhood; for though he had been a resident

more than twenty years, his life had been so really retired, and yet so identified with public movements of a benevolent kind, that few opportunities had arisen for the gratification of curiosity in the matter of his past life. Surmise indeed had not been idle, and had by degrees taken the form of authentic report. The secret which people judged him anxious to veil, had, as was thought, oozed out ; but his noble and untiring goodness had so won upon all hearts, that the discovered secret was tenderly dealt with, and all his neighbours and townsmen felt that it was a point of honour to seem as if they knew nothing, all the while sympathizing sincerely with their benefactor and friend. He was born at his ancestral residence, Mylden Place, in a distant county, of an old family. Fortune, substantially unimpaired, awaited his very entrance into life ; for his father fell, as became a soldier of an illustrious land, in the last American war, when the heir was unborn. His fresh life was tended by luxury and love ; it seldom waned even for a day, and he grew up to the age of youth with all the advantages of personal beauty, frankness of disposition, quickness of discernment, and well-regulated desires for learning and for power. School days had been to him one brief undistinguishable holiday—for in sport and in tasks he was equally at ease. Passing in due course to the University, he was readily welcomed to all that is so fascinating in the more refined society of the colleges of Oxford. But a change was at hand for which his young heart was ill prepared. The mother who had led him hitherto with a firm hand, the mother who had been to him through life, thus far, an angel of all good and all wisdom, was suddenly smitten with a prevailing fever, and before the first "long," which he had already mapped out for so much pleasure to be shared with her, he was summoned to close her eyes in death ; but when he came, their light was gone, and another hand than his had sealed them from his gaze for ever.

To one who had in fact never come in contact with any form of affliction sufficient to leave its impression behind, this great blow of death was fearful. It had never entered into his most grave thoughts that he might be so cruelly bereft of all on which his love hung fondly and hopefully, and

he was bowed to the ground with a voiceless woe. Like all young spirits, he fancied that he had no longer any wish to live—hardly any right. He was made of sterner stuff than mere sickly sentiment; but he had so placed his all upon that rich venture of a mother's love, that when he saw the wreck of death, he felt that he was poor indeed. Nor was the first affecting impulse of that kind that spends its strength in passionate tears, and then exhales like the morning mist; it dwelt long upon his nature, and left that nature softened to receive new and holy impressions. Such impressions fell upon him from the gentle wisdom which "time ripens on the lips of age." The aged servant of the temple in which his fathers had gone up to pray, for centuries, was ever in meek and unobtrusive zeal, at his side, to chide the exasperation of grief, if needful, but more often and more heartily to soothe the sore thoughts of irreparable loss by pouring the oil of joy, from the horn of the Heavenly Comforter, and diverting the vain and wasted sympathies of the youth's noble mind to aims of usefulness and an endless glory. So that, when he returned at length to resume his study and his friendly intercourse with many like-minded, he recognized those severe sanctions which bind men to diligence when mere taste and inclination might prove too weak to resist the countless temptations which beset the child of fortune in the grove as well as in the forum and the highways of life. He gave himself to the work of God, and happily for him, it needed no violent change in his outward demeanour; for his native refinement and cultivated taste had ever shrunk from excess and folly, and led him to association with those whose exemplary conduct charmed him and hedged him round with safety. His collegiate course was indeed successful above the average attained by young men in similar circumstances; but he made no pretensions and no special effort to distinguish himself as a profound scholar in any department. He drew, with delight, from the wells which the giants of old had hewn out for the refreshment of all time, and his innate passion for all forms of truth was enamoured of the precision and reliableness of the 'science of sciences'; but he dreaded lest his finer feelings should be

covered with the rust of antiquity as he had seen in some around him, and he sought with avidity, in the literature of Italy and France and of his own country, the self-same beautiful poetic life and wisdom that had first leaped forth to greet him from the sepulchres of a long-buried world. The tone of his mind soon recovered from its first serious depression, and in the buoyancy of uncorrupted health that mind seemed fitted for the highest deeds of goodness and of glory. Far from his disposition was the ostentation of superior virtue, but just as he shrank abhorrent from the pitiful vice he was compelled to witness, so surely did he draw near to the falling and the ruined with a compassion far too deep to be mistaken for contempt, and with a manly determination to save, so that in after life he was not obliged to refer to his college course merely with the undoubted satisfaction that he had escaped its snares, for he was many a time gladdened by the heartfelt thanks of those whom he had found in the meshes of debt and helpless vice, and had rescued with the strong hand. Throughout his period of residence at Oxford he had never lost sight of the vows which he had taken, and he never wavered in his purpose to redeem them, but he was yet young, and the fashion of his time, and no less the yearning of his own spirit after all that was sublime and lovely in nature, all that was pleasing and refining in art, all that was pregnant with wonder in the ruins of the past, led him to postpone the ordinance that should seal his vows, till he had travelled in far-off lands, where he might talk with the mighty dead as it were face to face, and garner for the wants of coming days the rich gleanings of that harvest field, where age after age has sent its reapers and bidden them welcome home with their bosoms full of sheaves. Every sense had been, in this case, rendered intensely delicate by the mere profusion of elegance and high art, in the midst of which he had been nursed from infancy. He was familiar with excellence in the statuary and paintings of his mother's house, so that without the painful and often ludicrous zeal which the ill-educated always display in matters of art, he could feel the power of *the world's greatest masters*, and engrave indelibly upon his *memory the surpassing glories of form, colouring and startling*

life, which still might be found in the churches, palaces, and monasteries of Italy and Spain ; and as he gazed and wondered now at the gorgeous realities of nature, and now at the inspiring creations of man, he breathed blessings on the name of Him who had called into being a world so rich and fair, and had granted to his favoured children so much capacity of enjoying, and such god-like power of reproducing the wonders of creation. In his many wanderings, he never for an hour wandered from the simplicity of his early beliefs, from the allegiance he owed to the church of his inheritance and his adoption, nor could siren charmers on the right and on the left unmoor his soul from its virtuous anchorage in the Word of God. But still it is not improbable that the very purity of his principle and conduct partly accounted for the tameness of his subsequent ministry, a tameness which in after years he so deeply deplored, and for which he sought long to make amends, whilst the growing repugnance which he felt for the ceremonial of worship in other countries whenever he chose to penetrate its artistic guise, naturally endeared to him by contrast the church of his own land, but, as he afterwards thought, it rendered him too easy and indifferent to its blemishes and serious defects.

After five years' absence, he came home to his own people, and as the heir of broad estates he was duly welcomed with acclaim and merriment and hearty benediction by his tenantry, who had everything to hope from his accession, and though they knew little of his character, they judged from his benevolent countenance that they had nothing to fear. Jolly squires of high degree rode furiously and out of the ranks of the cavalcade which advanced to meet him on the borders of his property, — many cousins near and far removed, some with noble and high-sounding titles, others with nothing in the wide world but a borrowed horse, and the prefix of Hon. to names that had been illustrious before the conquest,—clergy of many different shades of opinion, both ritual and political—bevy of sweet girls in graceful habits, curbing sprightly jennets which their proud Pa's had given them for the occasion—landau loads of dowagers with daughters, and spinsters without, *all smiles and joyousness outside, but within all*

wiles, and schemes, and jealousies, and mutual spite—rows upon rows of charity children like ninepins painted blue all over, except the head which was drearily white, lessoned by stern disciplinarian old ladies, till they could smile and look happy even with the tooth-ache; bundles of old men and women in the livery of many an old foundation, stood crouching close together to keep themselves warm, while they fell asleep leaning on their faithful old sticks. All these and others, an indescribable host, went forth to give the youth the welcome he intended hereafter to deserve and repay. The records of that festal scene, which are still in the vestry cupboard of the old church, have been diligently searched in the hope of discovering the kind of vocal or instrumental greeting which was put in force to do honour to the heir, but all is blank, to our amazement and sorrow, for at this very hour Bugle is most anxious to ascertain whether there ever was any music at all before he began to blow, and we are compelled to abandon the misguided man to his wretched doubt.

As soon as there appeared to be a little of that order which every man is so impatient to attain upon taking possession of a home,—disorder of a different kind showed symptoms of setting in wildly, for the visitors who crowded to pay or to exchange respects were meddlesome, excited, impudent, full of incompatible advice and suggestions, and wearisome wit, and annoying insinuations, and absurd prediction. There were great lords who weren't worth a shilling, who promised him their influence in the "highest quarters," and little lords almost out at elbow, who swore, egad! they'd show him life, if he'd only come to court. There were bishops who struggled for the honour of ordaining him, on catching wind of his intentions; and again, archdeacons, troubled with private ambitions, who rather discouraged the idea of his entering the church; and when at last these little plagues had died off like summer insects for the season, great dragon-flies and wasps came buzzing on the scene. These were pioneer spies, feelers, touters—in short, they were political agents; and, in those days, that meant Government tools; for assured, ye grumblers, that in the days of our grandsires,

office-tape was as broad, and as knotty, and as red, and a great deal more plentiful and powerful than now. They sounded him, they tapped him, in fact, drew him out in spite of himself, and when they found he was all right, they let fly at him with all their mouldy old reasonings and appeals to his honour and his loyalty, nay, even to his religion, urging with satanic skill that if he would only consent to stand for the county they'd bring him in (the conceit of some men!) and he'd be sure before long to be in the counsels of the king, and in that position with his ability and wealth he could do infinitely greater service to the church at large in its "frightful present peril" than he could by spouting the prayers to a congregation of ignorant rustics, and hunting and drinking with a parcel of booby squires. But Memnon's head gave forth no music to all this desert wind. The self-reliant soul crept in and in upon itself, the more they intruded their utterly distasteful flatteries and deceptions. It would not do. He had long since gone over the same ground carefully, along which they sought to drag him, and he knew every inch of the way, and had deliberately finally turned back.

After the lapse of a few months, a space needed for the investigation and arrangement of his affairs, he went up with light eager steps and gladdened heart to the altar of consecration; and with a humility that was genuine as it was prudent, he became the curate of the parish which was all his own, and the vicariate of which his father had presented to his early adviser and friend. And all men wondered and felt themselves better men when they saw these two walking together in "the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace." The elder loved the younger as his child, and no fawning thought of his curate's superior wealth ever tempted him to forget his own higher dignity, or to forego his just authority, neither did the child of fortune ever seek to trench upon his senior's rights, or fail in obedience, reverence, and tenderest son-like service. Years of uneventful life rolled on, and still the father and son by holiest ties grew wise together and ripen for the common home of which they thought so fondly and spoke so often. The young man in his noble mansion was not left solitary, but many and frequent visits from his

old companions knit his heart to the great world without and spared him the pain of personally mingling in its strife. Of all that he had known and loved at Oxford, not one that was not as worthy as he was welcome, showing how discreetly he had selected the friendships of his youth; and as they brought one by one treasures of knowledge and experience, they paid in the coin most prized, for all the genial hospitality they received. But this sequestered and half-wasted life was, in reality, unhealthy, though its influence was slow and unperceived. One symptom indeed, there was, which might have begotten uneasiness in a less habitual recluse, and that was an unnatural bashfulness and reluctance to mingle in the society of the fair sex. It could not arise from mere disgust at the first rude assaults upon his bachelor state, nor yet from the unmanly fear of being inveigled and duped. It was simple indolence. He found ample felicity in his books and in the lively correspondence of his friends, and just sufficient occupation in his parish to keep alive the sense of obligation to his fellow-creatures; but he had suffered the best parts of his social nature to go fairly to sleep, and they bade fair to sleep themselves to death, when, through a Heaven-directed accident, they were suddenly and violently wakened by an unmistakable angel in female form; awakened, we will add, to sleep no more,—to live, and throb, and rend, and burn the heart which had cradled their untimely slumbers. Of lowlier birth than Mr. Barton, and blest with slender fortune, she was yet sprung from a proud race of commoners, and in her veins raced the fiery pulses of the men who had hurled all feudal pride to the earth, and had even trodden a king beneath their feet. She was an orphan; and the desolate name was a charm to our young orphan's heart, far beyond the lustre of a pedigree covered with dust and stained with blood.

CHAPTER II.

ALICE VANE.

MR. BARTON had indeed been introduced to Alice Vane more than once by the heads of the family in which the later days of her youth had been passed. They treated her in general as their own child; they were very strongly attached to her by habit, and by the consciousness of having conferred many benefits and much love upon their desolate ward. But they did not feel under any particular obligation to press her undoubted loveliness on the attention of a wealthy, marriageable youth, so long as there was an entire row of sweet-pea-coloured girls, for whom they were more directly responsible, and who still gathered about them in an unbroken circle. And, besides, it never occurred to them that a gentleman of Mr. Barton's pretensions might possibly come to see some part of those charming qualities which made Alice the ornament as well as the delight of their own home. Liberally disposed as they were, and overflowing with kindness to their precious trust, they were not so ill-bred as to thrust their pet forward for everybody to notice and fall in love with, as they had done themselves, and it never entered into their heads that their visitor might have burdened himself with the memory of a name, which was well known to represent much less than ten thousand pounds. Politeness to him, and a thoughtful regard for the poor girl (lest she should be passed over and feel herself slighted), led them to perform the ceremony of introduction over and over again. Now, if the truth must be told, this repetition of the ceremony was by no means superfluous; for as the visits spoken of were of the most formal character, the most interesting part of the business to the young man was the going away and forgetting all about it as cleverly as he could; so that their officiousness was both kind and necessary. It so chanced, however, that Miss Vane was not accustomed to that kind of treatment, which, no doubt, the visitor intended

should be exceedingly respectful ; and she was by no means satisfied that an amiable, intelligent, and, above all, *young* gentleman should be so civilly indifferent or so culpably bashful in her presence. Accordingly, her mind was made up for a regular attack on his lifeless politeness the very next time the ceremony should be gone through. To his great astonishment and momentary confusion on his next visit just as he was getting into shape his old bow of acknowledgment, and as soon as the benevolent lady of the house had begun the genteel little farce, the lively maiden made as though she would have stopped her friend's mouth with one hand, while she extended her other towards Mr. Barton, saying, "Oh never mind, dear Ma, Mr. Barton and I are quite old friends ;" then turning, with her colour a little heightened, she added, "at least we ought to be, for we have been thoroughly introduced I'm sure, and as I know of no objection, I mean that we shall from this moment be old friends,—there, Sir, how do ye do ?"—The individual thus abruptly addressed would have recoiled for ever from simple rudeness ; but one look into that lovely flashing eye told him that her words sprang from a frank and stainless mind. One look into those lovely eyes, and—call it what you will—he was in love, and the whole matter was as clear and satisfactory as the Q. E. D. at the bottom of a proposition in Euclid. There are some men who require a little encouragement ; just a gentle push from the feeblest of hands, and then they may safely be left to the bias : they will roll, and tumble, and rush like the loosened ice-rock of the Alps. It is important for the right understanding of the coming events to form a tolerably correct picture of the mental power and character of this enchanting creature ; but it is at all times difficult to convey in writing an adequate notion of even physical female beauty, and when that beauty is greatly dependent on phases of character—changeable as the early spring—there would seem to be no means of conveying a true picture but by a detail of the whole life. As this, again, would be out of place in an episodic story, we must do the best we can to reproduce in *the reader's mind* the same singular vague sense of wonder, pity, and love, with which all who knew her intimately,

and especially her dear husband, were accustomed to regard her. The account which she herself gave of her mental development was evidently correct ; for her very manner of speaking, the epithets, the illustrations she made use of, and the wild words in which her recollections were couched, were in entire harmony with the kind of education she was describing. It seems that while yet scarcely more than a child, the intense passionateness of her nature had received a cruel disappointment. She had nourished a love for one who was all the while pledged to another. She had given rein to her fancy and her unbounded tenderness of heart, and in an hour of ill omen, she had laid bare the secret of her soul, only to be pitied, if not despised, by the object of her fervent passion. From that moment she had set, not a watch, but a seal on the fountain whose waters had been so bitter. The ardour of her whole nature was to be evermore repressed in one direction ; but it only broke out in another more hopeful, but hardly less dangerous to her future peace. She became an impetuous and daring student, asserting her right to all knowledge, and greedily devouring alike the coarse, the dainty, and the poisonous fruits of the tree of knowledge. In each new study she was impatient till she had passed the bounds of common attainment. The beginnings of wisdom only quickened her desires and emboldened her efforts ; they excited in her much of that passionate adoration with which the pilgrim hails from afar the first glimpse of the city of God ; but she had scarcely patience, as she looked through the distance still to be travelled over in weariness and pain. She longed to pass within the holiest holy of that temple, at the sight of which she had so trembled and wept. To her it ever seemed as if the veiled priestess of science were beckoning her urgently to advance without heeding her steps or sparing her strength ; and she went on with a stout heart through the labyrinths of mystery and doubt, in the assurance that the open and cloudless heaven of truth would soon smile all around.

On her memory all time had hung its golden web, and her own hands had wrought in the legends of glory and of shame, the splendid heraldry of illustrious men and noble deeds. The *spell of the poet* had been cast on her ; she had delivered

herself to the ravishing spirit, and she had bowed before the mysterious invisible power as a captive—as a willing and adoring slave. The mightier spell of religion had gone down deeper still into the secret places of her nature, had seized upon her whole compass of feelings, had established a tyranny rather than its common rule of pure persuading love. Religion, as a mere sentiment, had usurped far more than its rightful influence over her, and had, as in such a fashion it always does, weakened and exhausted the spirit it had assumed to support and bless. The real value of that feeling which for a long time enthralled and fascinated her whole being would be overrated if judged merely by its purity and intensity as a yearning after the unseen and eternal—a vain stretching out of the hands of intellectual appetite, towards a dim and mysterious immortality. Its true power was tested and completely perverted by the introduction of a new human passion, even though the object of that passion was himself eminently devout, and the constant burden of his love-whisperings was the subject of Christian revelations for the guidance and redemption of men. But the love which now established itself was a power not to be gainsayed—one that could allow no rival even in religion, if that religion were not itself a divine love in the heart. As she listened to the plaintive story of her lover's pain and hope and fond desire, it seemed indeed as if the afflatus did drop down from heaven; but pure and lofty as it was, it proved itself not only of the earth, earthy, but virtually hostile to true faith. Her life had been a perpetual fever; excitement had been her daily bread, and she needed a love far more intense than ordinary, to awaken all the springs of tender passion in herself; and when she looked upon the heaving form, the kindling countenance, the speechless ecstasy of the young clergyman, she knew that he had earned, and she suffered him to win, all her treasure of affection.

Mr. Barton's heart had been so suddenly stormed, that he had scarcely leisure to reflect, and no inclination to weigh the step to which his passion incessantly urged him. But when *he did* for a few moments endeavour to give substance and *shape to the dreams* of the future, he was peculiarly rejoiced

by the knowledge of her great mental power—he thought of the pleasure he had known in the acquisition of knowledge, and in the prospect of unfolding his hoarded wealth of wisdom to so lovely and so promising a student, the old pleasure seemed to revive and to be doubled. After his marriage, however, he soon discovered that her mind was as richly stored as his own in almost every department—that it was already as ardent as and greatly more aspiring than his own—and that its habits, however dissolute, were fixed, and could not be reduced to order and discipline even by love such as his. When first she laid open that mind which he had fondly hoped to find empty but ready, strong but plastic—he was shocked ; it came on him with all the power of a surprise, and for a moment his love staggered under the disappointing discovery. He felt as if he had been deceived. But he was very unjust, nor could that cruel suspicion linger one moment after he had turned to the beaming face upturned in the wistful and docile curiosity of womanly love. He could not suspect that dear one of hypocrisy. Oh no—still he was sad, and sadder he grew for a little while, as he came upon trace after trace of the fiery trial through which this young mind had fought its way to a barren victory. Often the agonizing thought would stay in spite of him, and stare at him till he drooped and wept. He thought that a time might come when the authority of his love might so far be lessened as to let the loved one slip from her only safety—nearness to himself, striving ever as he did to keep near to God. But the thought maddened him rather than depressed him. He would repeat with unutterable unction in the depths of his soul the vows which had made her his own, and he would dare all issues, all loss, all pain, so that he might hold fast the heart which at present was all his own. He revered the power of love, as it made itself master of his own spirit, and he trusted to that power to save and keep safe his darling wife. He gladly dismissed the student-like dream of intellectual communion, and the life-long interchange of sublime thoughts, that he might the more intently watch and feed the love in which he had found and from which he hoped such immeasurable gladness. It should not fade—he would not set light store by Heaven's best

earthly gift, but would tend it with a miser's patience, and have it always safe. She seemed to have found rest for her spirit, not only in the embrace of her husband but also in the light duties and gently exciting pleasures of her stately home. Often as they played from heart to heart their mutual fondness—it wasted not—it palled not, it gave no token to the watchful husband that it was otherwise than a joy for ever. There was difference in the character but not in the degree of their young loves. Hers was impetuous, while his was deeply tender. His was the quiet golden summer evening sky; hers the vivid lightning across that serene—telling alike of heats and storms. In his official duties she bore a cheerful and happy part. In his heavenward flights she strove to keep abreast with him, and when she could not, she clung to the skirts of his mantle when he went up arrayed in righteousness to meet his King and Lord. Her love caught the sunbeams of the heaven to which her companion's thoughts so often sped—it looked like a vital experimental sympathy with him—it even deceived herself—no wonder that it calmed and comforted the misgiving heart of her husband. Yet in truth it was a deception resting on them both. She made literature, politics, science, tributary to her love of him, and she did the same with the name and doctrines and rites of his holy faith. The very ceremonies which shadowed out the awful mysteries of redeeming grace were with her emblems of their oneness when he was with her, or sacraments of sweet remembrance when he was absent from her side. She made an idol of the priest, and mistook her redundant love for him as partly love to his God.

CHAPTER III.

A GIFT FROM HEAVEN.

THE year glided to its close. Each day renewed the peaceful happiness of each heart, and there was no need of new ties to keep alive or heighten their mutual love; but in mid-winter the still pleasures of the long evening hours gave place to the new charms of baby-laughter, or the touching strains

baby-sorrow. An heir had been born, and all were proudly
 d. A son slept in the embrace of a father's arm—near to
 heart—and his sleeping smile, or waking cry, brought new
 emotions to the old one of a single, deep affection—not
 wing its life away from the former love—but rather ren-
 ing it stronger and purer than ever. To the impassioned
 ure of the mother, this little gift from God became, from
 hour of its birth, a snare rather than a blessing. It
 med even to have shaken the depths above which were
 foundations of her wifely love—to have drawn up the
 ole being in one proud, greedy, selfish, raging passion,
 ich became at once fanatical idolatry. And so might it
 ays prove with the mighty fervour of a mother's love, but
 the chastening of poverty and care, or the wise applica-
 n of principle as a pressure, a curb, a discipline. What
 l not woman do and endure in her unselfish love for man !
 hat guilty indifference to higher claims will her conscience
 ; allow, under the cover of her devotion and self-denial
 vards a human being ! But in the love which the child
 akens there is the whole power of selfishness in addition
 the transferred or reproduced self-devotion of the earlier
 tinct. It would appear as if marriage was a trial by which
 ungenerous elements of character must be either overcome
 developed. The gentle willinghood, the sleepless watch-
 ness for another's happiness, is as improving to the cha-
 racter of a woman as it is full of seductive peril to the
 aining generosity of man. It is a preparation for the
 e discharge of the highest functions ever committed into
 man hands ; and a most needful preparation we know it to
 precisely because, in the ministration of a mother's love,
 fishness and benevolence are utterly confounded. It is her-
 f she doats upon, and frets over, and indulges and coaxes.
 The manner in which a young mother fulfils the duties that
 so fascinating, that look so like kindness untinged with
 fishness, shows how far the trial of her previous love-life
 ; been successful in placing the native selfishness of a
 man heart under the control of principle and habit. If
 is able to use all her fervour for the child's well-being—
 the endearments and solicitude which she lavishes on her

little one, are truly pointed at the protection and wise training of the child, they are not only excusable and bearable, but they are a glory to our race, and a joy to see. But if there is redundancy in these endearments—more than can be well explained by the calls of nature and circumstances—more than can be interpreted into Heaven-taught self-devotion to the noblest of occupations—more than is compatible with the becoming dignity of a matron—more than find place without intrusion and without making its presence painfully felt in a heart that but yesterday was too strait for the love she bore to her husband,—then, and so far, the sweet preparatory trial and nuptial love have been vain ; for the inborn selfishness has only been in abeyance. And no sooner does it hear the imperious cry, which it should have known by this time how to resist, than it leaps forth rampant, well nigh overturning the altar of that first love ; it can never be recalled now ; it has gone forth on its self-deluding and most destructive mission ; it mingles fire with the sun-light of true mother-love ; it blights and twists till the object of a world of anxious and unceasing love becomes an eye-sore and a heart-breaking curse to the authors of its being. What is all that stale and sickening conceit—that dowdy, frouzy, slipshod, worrying, bothering, physicking, coaxing, boasting, prosing, moping, nervous, impertinent devoteeism which has a cradled baby for its idol, and a circle of equally nonsensical or most thoroughly disgusted human beings for the theatre of its display ? Are we really compelled to bow down and worship this painted, grinning, loose-limbed monster, as if it were the real divinity, the Heaven-implanted principle of maternal love ? Are we to sanction its gross absurdities—its revolting and ruinous excesses—under the fear of being charged with a selfish sense of the irksomeness of a duty in itself incumbent, imperative, paramount ? Are thoughtful men and women to stand by with sealed lips, and the frightful affectation of approval, when not merely their taste is offended, but their better judgment mocked, their inmost heart wrung with pity for the babe and contempt for its weak mother ? No ; let there be a *little gentle reasoning* allowed in such a wilderness of insipid *romance* ; let the mother have at least the chance of knowing

that every one of the giggling hypocrites around sees through it all in another—slow though they be to believe it in their own cases—see through it all, we say, and could, if they were honest, startle her self-complacency not a little, by assuring her that it is not love for her child, but most unmitigated and repulsive self-indulgence which rules her whole life. Don't suffer the ridiculous imposture to remain on the young mother's mind without at least protesting, that what little love remains of Nature's giving, is now quite smothered, and will speedily die out under the loathsome selfishness which she has been profane enough, and fool enough, to call by the name of *love*. Save, if it be not too late, children yet unborn from being the victims of this terrible mistake. "She's such a good mother—one in a thousand." How often we hear it ! What does it mean ? In nine cases out of ten, it means that she neglects all other duties for one, and by that very neglect utterly unfits herself for the right discharge of that one. It means that she doats, or, in other words, she has unfortunately come to see herself in her child, and instantly her love is redoubled—drained away from the fair garden, all of which seeks its verdure and sunny glories from that perverted river of life. It means that she simply wastes her bodily health, throws down the defences of decency and orderly habit, invites sloth to the body, and folly to the mind, and waywardness to the temper, and winter to her heart. She has chosen to consecrate a natural impulse by the name of duty—as an excuse for an indulgence which might remain secret or secure of sanction from others ; and, as in all other cases where people wilfully or carelessly deliver themselves over to a falsehood, she becomes blind to the truth, resentful of advice, incapable of seeing the fatal issues of her conduct which are patent to all others, and fill them with dismay and dread. The world and life form our probation. Who denies it ? But the probation is not like the occasional or regular drill of the soldier. It is constant ; there are no holidays ; there are no nights of repose from this discipline ; and one of the most solemn applications of life's great test is in the relation of mother and child. There the true character is quickly ripened, and may be seen at a glance. Previously it was

hidden even from herself ; as for others, how could they discern the baseness of selfishness in one who was so quiet, so bewitching, so astounding, so enchanting ; most of all was it unlikely that he could see it, who has most of all to deplore it—for the very laws of the passion which led him to select her, invested her with an amiable grace—which belonged to the passion, and never in any case to the object. But the mother has all restraint, all disguise, flung off by the very tiny hand which creeps to her bosom, and knocks at the heart's door for all the love she can give.

If selfishness has really been made subject to reason, but especially if it has been crucified with Christ, the love which nature bids to exist for the training of the frail immortal will be no less deep and fervent, because it is far above the grotesque antics of selfishness ; the follies that, in polite words at least, the world is only too ready to excuse. The looker on at such a scene—a scene which Raphael could not worthily depict, though his mind was filled with its only complete ideal in the Mary and the Jesus, whose mutual love is the model and standard all profess to revere—will be able to tell (if asked, otherwise, perhaps, he might be gladly content with the unconscious knowledge) that love is unselfish in the vigour and the very calmness of a mother's self-command ; and, to assure the inquirer that so far as human agency can effect so blessed a result, the babe on her knee will be an honour to the age in which he lives, and will go, when he has done here, right up to the heaven of God. But the reflective mind will be even more instantaneously convinced in the opposite case ; indeed, the misfortune (considering the generally very serviceable restraints of courtesy), is that he cannot doubt for a moment—when he sees that sentimental, morbid, all-absorbing, all-devouring imitation of mother-love—that that woman has proved herself already incurably selfish, is abandoned even now to the belief of a most palpable lie, and will, so far as her influence reaches, inflict a mortal curse on society, and damn her baby's soul ! Are we wrong, then, in denouncing as most disingenuous selfishness, three-fourths of that *overweening, fidgeting fondness* which all men conspire to gloss over and excuse, by using a word which is truly enough

applicable—"She idolizes her baby." It is idolatry—as hurtful and debasing to the devotee—as great a violation of reason and common sense—as stupid and as accursed, both in theory and in fact, as any other false worship. Where, then, shall we find a remedy? In the truth, told with candour and love, though indignant sobs should swell each doating mother's breast, and hot tears should run in rivers from the loveliest of loving eyes.

Christianity affords a remedy—a grand corrective. We may admit, if that will be of any real service to either party, that even in the old pagan world there were influences which, if allowed to operate freely and fairly, would go far to purge mother-love from this loathsome disease; but, considering the circumstances of the present day, the prevalence of Christian knowledge, Christian profession, Christian morality, Christian ceremonies, and the pretty general power of Christian principles—it is not extravagant to assert, that the only efficient corrective of that human selfishness which, when mingled with natural love, changes all to poison and pestilence, is Christianity. The practical worth of the great central doctrines of the Gospel is not seen to advantage in the present life, unless in some such case as that now under notice. Its claims would shine forth a thousand-fold more clearly if it were brought nigh as a helper and guardian angel to the very springs of domestic and social peace. It may be said, alas! without giving much chance for a striking rejoinder, that professed Christians are, if anything, more in fault, or, at least, more noticeably in fault, than others. We can only say, blame not the medicine, when the patient will persist in swallowing only half of it, or in throwing it altogether away.

Alice Barton idolized her baby. If our duty were consistent with the exercise of charity, we might easily frame plausible excuses, such as her early orphanhood, her enthusiastic temperament, her desultory and injurious education. But our business is to represent the mischief itself—the evil and often fatal consequences of that seemly and deceptive self-indulgence which has usurped on so many hearths the sacred *habit, air, and language* of maternal love. We are

concerned to exhibit the evil in its results with a view to a remedial course rather than to account for its existence and to palliate its offensiveness in this particular case. However we may explain the fact, there can be no doubt that it is a most painful and momentous question—how is this untimely and most fatal intrusion of selfishness to be dealt with? To urge that question it will be needful only to tell the story of her love and grief, to give at least a sketch of this young mother in the prime of her new existence as the watcher and nurse of a child, to give an inkling of that love which strung her whole nature to excessive sensitiveness, bought up all she had of love and hope, virtue, patience, meekness, mental power, moral beauty—as with a pearl of great price, which she counted above all cost, the possession of which was all she gloried or trusted in, the loss of which was more than death itself.

Beyond all dispute, she was less outwardly and openly and repulsively idolatrous of her child than most of those who (counting by millions) are obnoxious to this grave charge. For many years the whole power of her passionate nature had been repressed even while she was daily fostering its strength, or had been expended in an entirely different direction, even after she had responded to the touch of the wand which makes all hearts tremble in their turn. True it is that her native pride and her habitual dignity of demeanour were such as to disguise from all but God and her own soul the impetuous character of her new-born love. True, indeed, is it, that the silly exhibitions, idle chattering, and girlish vanity of most young mothers were far enough removed from the grave and silent ecstasy with which she loved her little one. Outwardly, indeed, this addition to her wealth of gladness produced a tamer mood, a nearer compliance with the routine of social life, more matronly reserve, and more domestic regularity; but not till long after was the truth divulged that she had put strong iron bands of constraint upon herself, lest her love should be construed as folly by reason of its extravagance, and almost ungovernable frenzy. She bent *over the little cot* for hours when her baby slept. With lips *compressed*, and clenched teeth—her eyes dim and vacant—

awoke ; and then she wept. Were they tears of relief she had not died,—or of joy at the thoughts which had lancing through her brain for hours, and in his sweet had found their reality and their recompense ;—or was reaction from the long strife of fear and hope—the ng of a fearful and unbelieving soul, not with Israel's ger of grace, but with Saul's evil spirit? She never e cause ; it had been to her as sacrilege to unveil the gs of her maternal love.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIFT RECALLED.

ring-time of a new year burst suddenly from the ; of ice and cloud, and its sweet breath brought new ts of life to the baby-heir ; but in the summer heats ling pined and wasted its little life away. She saw e—her idol baby, in its little cot—but shed no tear. d always and only wept at his awaking smile ; but he wake, and she could weep no more. The great grave ened in the chancel of the little church. The cenotaph y illustrious men threw wide its gates, to give place baby-heir.

stood by the vault ; but still not to weep. She gave n flesh to the greedy grave, but felt no pain. She thought that she should meet him elsewhere. She hope, no desire, to embrace her son in the presence angels and in the day of God. The very name of i was erased from the tablet of her memory, and the ve she had cherished as a substitute for her loyalty to the love of husband and of child had been quenched len out like sparks—by the first fell grief. Day and he watched, and started at every passing sound, but not. She seemed to know who watched with her, noiselessly about the bed, or gazing in upon that grief ; but she replied to his wistful, tearful glance, *him, dry eyes.* After many days she seemed to be at

peace—content, but still silent. She had ceased to listen ; her eye ceased its straining, and closed in sleep,—a fitful, troubled slumber, yet better far than that long vigil. Mr. Barton, relieved from immediate care, sought repose or change in his library, and was just falling into a happy slumber, soothed by the words of grace which he had found in the sacred page, when the door of the room was quietly opened, and his wife entered, pale and sad, but erect and stern, and with a mournful tone addressed him—"Henry, where is baby ? I have sought him everywhere, and cannot find him. Surely they would not take him out without my morning kiss. Have you hidden him from me, that I may love him more when I see him again ? I tell you, dearest, I cannot love him any more. I try, but I cannot ; he is my all, and I would leave even you and die to save his little heart one pang. Give him to me, love, for I am weary with waiting. Let me see him, touch him, kiss his little lips, and stroke his pretty head—a moment, only a moment ; and you may hide him then—just a little while."

"Ah, dearest, he is hidden from both our eyes—hidden with Christ in God. But you shall one day see him again ; and even you will rejoice then that he went so soon to so much bliss. Come to my arms, my loveliest mourning one ! God has left you your first love. Ah, let not your tenderness for me lie buried with the babe we both have lost ! Yes, BOTH, for my own heart is chilled, and I need the old love to warm it into life. The little one is with Jesus, but I am here, and I will be a child to you as well as husband. Come, my sweet, let us seek the peace of God !"

"And has God robbed me of my child—taken it away for ever ? My pretty one ! it was not His but mine ! I bore it in my womb ; I travailed, O how joyously for him ! I gave him the strength of my own best life, that he might not die. He was all my own ! He loved me alone—not God, nor any but his mother—me only ; he clung to me, and nestled in my bosom. I knew he saw a robber near ; he started, cried, shrieked, and still clung to his mother's breast. He would not go ; he did not want to leave me. He stretched his little hands, as if for help, for pity, for a brief reprieve, that he

might live to whisper *mother*, and to bring a blessing on her soul. But he would not hear ! O cruel, cruel Death ! To break my baby's heart, and tear him from his mother !"

"But Death, my dearest one, does but the bidding of the good God. He gave, and He hath taken away. Help me to bless His name,—bow to the Smiter's hand !"

"Bless His name ? Why should I bless the slayer of my boy ? He gave, say you ;—why did He give ? To plant a barbed arrow in my poor heart ? He hath taken away, you say. Husband, hear me ! I am not mad, but that lost infant-cry rings through my ear. It comes from the closed vault. In the still night it pierces the dull close air ; and what, think you, is its cry ? (With deep emotions half dread.) It bids me rise up, as now I do, curse God, and die. Oh, cruel God ! Death is but a poor minion. God has slain my child. I will curse Him as I stand. Would that I might die ! (In a lower meditative tone.) But He will not let me die. He will not hush that shrieking babe ! He will wither me away by slow and cruel grief,—call back his angel sleep, when I would woo him to my couch ! Or, He will fill my arms with my baby boy in dreams, then bid me wake to find him gone,—to seek him everywhere, and then He will scorn and mock my woe, for I have cursed Him, and again I curse, but still He will not slay me, as He slew my baby."

"He shall not come any more upon the earth, but we shall go to him ;" in soft and solemn tone, the afflicted husband said.

"Not any more ? Oh, no ! I would not have him back to die again ! Go to him ? Great God, loose the silver cord, and let me go, and I will bless Thee, even evermore, and teach my angel baby to repeat Thy name with praise. Oh, hear me for my baby's sake, and bid Thy death come quickly to me."

The wild prayer was all but answered, A sleep, a fever, a madness, and a lifelong woe fell on that blighted mother. Strong arms unaided, bore her to the chamber she had left, and the strong heart endured for her sake what but for the sovereignty of love, would have broken that heart in pieces. To those who know not that the love of husband and wife

infinitely surpasses the trifling tenderness of lovers, it is vain to describe the assiduity the smothered grief and importunate beseechings before God which that chamber witnessed for weeks and months together; and to those on whom a blight so terrible has fallen, but found prepared for equal faithfulness and self-denying care, it is needless, as it must be harrowing, to describe the scene.

CHAPTER V.

A VERY IRREGULAR PRACTITIONER.

MR. BARTON was so little a practical man, had had so little occasion for the exercise of presence of mind, and, besides, was so awe-struck and bewildered, that he was utterly helpless in the first confusion of this heavy stroke. But the plump busy-body, who had, in happier days, been installed in the almost sinecure office of nurse, was a person who gloried in generally having all her wits about her, and it was at her suggestion that recourse was had in the first instance to the village apothecary, an individual whose name has perished from the roll of history, but whose deeds live and breathe in human monuments to this day. He had that estimable advantage over his fellow apothecaries—he was self-taught; and he had further left them in the shade by managing to compound a pretty extensive practice out of two separate and equally honorable professions. He was great in midwifery, but in secret and on dark nights he was equally great in farriery. He couldn't afford to sport a nag, and he was likely enough never to be in the position to command so profitable a luxury. Indeed, it may be doubted whether he had any ambition that way, for he was of a sluggish bodily temperament, to say nothing of his higher nature; and being much given to the fascination of the social glass and circle he deemed it quite sufficient hardship that he should be obliged to go once every twelvemonth as far as the four-lane ends, a mile and a half off, to usher farmer Bengoe's broad-faced sons and daughters into this lower world. His sphere of

usefulness was thus contracted in one direction, and furtively extended in another, without much likelihood of losing his professional status. But never had it figured in his wildest dreams, even when very drunk, that he should be summoned to the Hall, unless by the special invitation of the unfortunate grooms who not seldom grazed their horses' knees and daren't tell master; so that though at the one moment, when the messenger was thundering at his shop-door till the bottles shook upon the shelves, he was lording it high and mighty over the landlord himself in the parlour of the "Blue Bottle" tavern, next door to his place of residence and business, it must be confessed that he had some palpitation of the heart when he heard the rat-tat-tat, repeated and urgent. But he said, merely:—"Drat it, they'll have my knocker off, if I aint sharp;" and with relaxed nerves, fumbling his little white hat, he took what he hoped would prove a short leave of his favourite haunt, and addressed himself to that sinuous policy by which he contrived to gain his back door, when he thought there was any body particular at the front, contrived further to dash cold water on his face and swallow a mysterious preparation of ammonia to make him sober before answering the knocker,—with a curse on the world at large for interrupting his professional experiments in the back kitchen. But we will be bold to say, that when he saw the dark livery of the Hall, and received the momentous summons to what was thought the death-bed of a squire's and clergyman's wife all in one, he couldn't have grown taller in his buckled shoes if he'd been a Dominican friar all his life, practising penance on one of his own worn-out racks. This astonishment produced a positive deterioration in the value even of his professional services; for his sense of importance had grown so unwieldy, that what with it and his recent potations, his progress in the track of the nimble and anxious servant man was much less satisfactory than it might otherwise have been. In due time, however, after repeated insults on his tardiness, such as,—“Keep steady, old boy,—take your time;—I say, don't hurry yourself, don't!—come along, will you, old tortoiseshell;”—we say, in due time the man of drugs was within the walls of the old mansion, had unbuckled his heavy

shoes and left them down stairs close to the door with his umbrella and great coat, and had stalked, with a proper degree of self-assertion, into the sacred scene of so much suffering, and so much love. Mr. Barton raised his drooping head in profound amazement; but the shock evidently revived him, for with much more petulance than was quite natural to him even at his worst, he said :

"Who on earth are you? And what do you stand staring there for?—what do you want?"

"Oh, sir, if you please, I'm proud and happy to see you in your present distress. My name is (but, alas! for perishable fame, we cannot give it in this place)—and very much at your service."

"Oh, it's you, is it? I beg your pardon, I'm sure; it's very kind of you to come without being sent for!"

"Oh, but I was summoned, Mr. Barton, and your servant can bear witness that it was at great personal, and, I may add, professional inconvenience, that I consented to come—he began to tremble for his fee, so he resolved to lay it on pretty thick)—but when I knew the lovely, in fact, I might say, 'the loveliest flower in all the dell' was, so to speak, drooping, I could no longer refuse, and you see I'm come."

"Well, Doctor (how he smirked at that, to be sure), you know we have had a heavy trial, and I'm afraid my dear wife has taken it too much to heart."

"Oh, trust me, sir, we'll soon have her round again; nothing like taking *these* kind of things in time. It's well you sent for me."

"You mean, it's well you came, Doctor."

"No, I don't; if you did not send, your agent did, and that binds you, the principal, all the world over."

"Very well, so be it, my good man; you surely don't think that I should accept your services if I did not mean to pay for them?"

"Well, then, to business; that's all as should be. I never doubted you for a moment, sir, and besides, sir, I trust I'm not mercenary. Ah! (looking with great, round, bloodshot eyes into that holy place of pain and grief) a decided case of fever—can't give it a name just now, you know—very

bad, very hot, quick, sir, very quick (feeling her pulse), damned quick ; but we'll stop his fun (pulling out his green silk pocket-book, where his three lancets slumbered rustily among tavern bills, and long-standing bills of various other matters, for and against his credit)."

But the clergyman whose cultivated mind was already in advance of many medical men, and who was inclined to be very cautious in the use of the lancet, gently dissuaded the indignant practitioner, and his remonstrances were ably seconded by the chubby nurse at the half-opened door, who almost screamed out, "For God's sake, master, don't let him do it,—Phil tells me he nigh bled the big black mare to death only last week. Let him go ; he'll murder her outright—I can see it in his look, for all his grinning."

Indignation was out of place and useless under so serious a charge ; so, preparing to back out as well as he could, the generous husband paid him, with a regard to his own husbandly love rather than to any intrinsic deserts, and the inflated apothecary vented his contempt for amateurs and nurses by a fervent prayer "that the sufferer might live till morning," and then by banging the door as loud as ever he could. At the hall door he came plump on one of the several physicians who had been summoned from the neighbouring town, and who had just then been wishing he could light on the individual whose ugly shoes and umbrella had nearly broken his gouty leg. The recognition was far from mutual ; for the great Doctor, whom everybody knew so well, hardly knew anybody, for his part, except those whose tongues he had carefully studied ; and certainly, if he had known the bloated little man in his stocking feet, he would have been slow to own that knowledge when any one was by. Others eminent in their profession speedily followed, bringing with them, to the relief and healing of the rich, the ripe experience they had gained—sometimes—at the expense of the sickly and smitten poor. Everything that their united wisdom could devise was put in course of operation, and they left the anxious husband and the family surgeon with the consoling hope that this sickness was not unto death. Well might it have been if their favorable pro-

gnostic had been belied ; but this is a hard saying, when we reflect on the unspeakable relief their words had brought to one mourning soul. He relied upon their skill, not daring to doubt or suppose that they could be wrong.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WATCHER AND THE DAWN.

NOR were they wrong. It was a wasting and a grievous sickness. But could the lovely sufferer have seen who nursed her, and how tenderly—could she have known the long, long agony of suspense, the exhausting night-watch, the weary days that seemed like weeks, the weary weeks that seemed like years, not from impatience, but only from the intensity of hope and prayer, and all-absorbing love for her ; could her glance have rested for one moment on that bent and tottering form, or read the story of her own sorrow from that burning brow and feverish hectic cheek, or caught the strange tones of that hollow voice which she had so loved to hear in months gone by, truly she had wished to die. This blow had not fallen upon a whole heart, strong to bear, and full of its first fresh faith in God ; but the bruise was yet sore, and the inward strength was all but spent in that great grief that had laid her so low. Not mere ancestral pride, nor the coarse ambition of the wealthy to transmit their name and build with it a tower of glory on which their own emblazonment might hang unsullied ; these were not the feelings that had been blasted by the hand of death. Far other and more delicate were the emotions which had spread like the bay tree in that father's soul. All that new world of passion which his young wife had called into beautiful being, clothing it with the light of her own refined and ardent love, had been reproduced when his child had first rested in his arms. All the holiest aspirations of his own piety bounded with new force towards immortality, when he looked into the blue smiling eyes which brought a message from the skies, that he should train the babe for God. Devoutly had he received

the charge, devoutly had he sought for wisdom from its un-upbraiding Giver, devoutly consecrated God's own to God in baptism, and to him it was no unmeaning rite, but a vow which God imposed and would one day judge. And he was not found worthy, not to be trusted with this dear soul—so dear to him, so much dearer to his God—too precious to be left to custody so weak, too ripe for heaven to need the dread purgation of a sinful world, too good for even love like his? O what had he not lost? It was in his grasp, why could he not hold it back from death? Why had he let it pass within the impenetrable veil?

He had found a well of comfort in his wilderness so bleak; a well which the angel of the Lord had shown to him hard by, else he too had sunk down and died; but his affections so powerful, and lately so supreme, had been shaken to their very base, and he believed that with all the fulness of a Saviour's grace he could indeed bear no more! And had God stretched forth His hand to break the bruised reed? It could not be; His truth and righteousness and all-saving pity were pledged that He would bind up the broken heart. It was the summer shower, swift and dense; but it did not break the hanging reed, it only bruised it more. The night of weeping lingered as though it had no morrow brightening below its clouds; but the morrow did rise, calm and clear, and welcome as the winter sunrise. It was not a fitful and cloudy dawn; but there was a deep-drawn sigh, and one sweet heartfelt all-rewarding smile.

"Alice, do you then know me, dearest one?"

"I know it all now; you are my Henry, and I have come back to bless you for your love. I have slept long, I know, and oh, how glorious have been my dreams! I have lived an age with my lost baby, in his new home above. I saw the angels take him in their arms and bless him as their own. I heard him say, 'My mother!' and a seraph flew to meet me, that I might draw nearer to my boy. I might not fold him to my breast, for he was purified, and I, O shame, I had distrusted, I had cursed his God and mine. He might not kiss me; but as he only looked on me, the spell of mortal sin was broken, he told me that my curse had passed away, and

I awake, my love, in peace and redoubled love for one who whispered to my rebellious heart sweet words that opened all heaven to my dream and gave me back my child. Do you know, my husband, who taught me that gentle faith? Blessed be His name! He gave my baby to me, and He took it from me. Oh, kneel for me, and I will bless His name on earth as last night I did in heaven."

No words broke the holy quietude of prayer as the servant of the Lord knelt and poured out his double burden of rejoicing that he had heard the words of reason, though only in the telling of a delirious dream, and that henceforth, when his own faith failed, he would find it where he had long looked vainly, in the bosom of his wife. Sleep fell upon the feeble and exhausted Alice, like the soft kiss of her sainted child, or like the seal of the Father's pardoning grace.

There was silent gladness in every heart, when the long-expected tidings reached the faithful and mourning servants of the house. For she who had lain sick and so near the grave was honoured for the dear master's sake, and in no slight measure for her beauty, her motherly woe when she was stricken, and her liberal forbearing spirit towards their many faults. There was higher joy in the good rector's heart, who had watched his afflicted friend almost as fondly as that friend had watched his precious wife: and what shall we say of the tenantry? If she had died, all would have sorrowed as for a friend and sister, and now that she bade fair to live, who could blame their exultation, rude and premature as it might be deemed? But, stranger than all, the nameless surgeon of the village rose straightway to a height of popular importance that made him giddy (at least something did): for the rash man bought new curtains for his windows, rushed unheedingly into all the splendour of brass door-plate, new knocker, and a special shiny wire pull, which never went further than the door, and was innocent of bell. For many weeks he had doggedly succumbed to the defeat of that eventful night, hung his head when the wicked landlord asked him (as he did every night)—How he found his lady-patient *to-day*. But now he was vocal with his own praise, *argumentative* beyond all his former logical exploits, and he

to his own great glee—whether others believed or not, and but little—but to his own mind it was as clear as day that two make four, that if he hadn't bled the lady (which more he had done for all the opposition of the curate, especially when the nurse wasn't looking), she would have atomized and laid out and put to one side weeks before. He had heard that a great man, in London, had said, and as now a great man, he thought he also might say to his large audiences, "I have given you a reason, Sir, I am bound to furnish you with understanding." Certain it is he lied so like truth that at last he didn't know the difference if other people did, and somehow or other he grew paler and redder in the face on the strength of that lie day and every hour of his short remaining life.

Now it would seem that we have got at that painful mystery which the good people of Arlton were so eager to get at, mysterious in their good-natured attempts to keep it to themselves. And truly this was the sum and substance of what they knew; but it was not the secret that had festered in the old man's memory, and made one half his life so dreary and yet so earnest. We dare not attempt to unveil the secret in all its frightful details; but we must show it, and then withdraw it from the scene.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET.

Her health was marked in the young wife's case with no any interruption; on the contrary, it was rapid, and to all who hailed her return with pleasure could have been no objection. But when she again took her accustomed place in the family and in the neighbouring circles, to the eyes of those who had known her in the flush of youth, there were no changes, not in her looks and liveliness and wit, nor in her religious sentiments, but in her whole manner and disposition. She was restless, irritable, often utterly devoid of self-control in the presence of the most trivial incident. These peculiarities were not unnoticed by the family; but she seldom wandered from her slightest movement; but

the thankful heart could only hope, after all that had wrung and pierced it ; and every eccentric speech or action was set down to incomplete recovery rather than to coming illness. Change of scene was tried with partial benefit. Her husband needed not so strong an inducement as her recovery to turn again to those lands of marvel and of lore, which he had visited in years bygone. But when he saw the rapture of his beloved one, amid the wild Alpine heights, and her luxurious tranquillity in the vineyards and gardens of the sunny South, he felt that he could leave home and country to return no more—could recall his priestly vows, and become an alien and a pilgrim for the sake of his dear Alice. But she was the first to weary for her saddened home, for she knew that in a little while the empty cot would be again in its old place that she might watch and pray above another sleeping babe. She would not have the heir of such a husband born in a strange land, and she hastened her half-reluctant husband till Mylden Place sheltered them once more.

The child was born—a daughter. The vacant place was more than filled, and the hard lesson of her brother's death had prepared a safer welcome for the little girl than a mere earth-born godless love. And others too were born. This home was rich in these the most unfailing of all treasures ; but in no long time the old symptoms of extreme sensitiveness, and fretfulness, and alternate wildness and depression returned and multiplied, and all unremarked by the indulgent husband. Habitual use of stimulants confirmed (though taken in the desire of relieving) the symptomatic moods of languor or of feverish wretchedness, of which she was herself distressingly conscious. So long as the rich wines brought the old bloom upon the cheek, and unloosed the silvery tongue, and revived the sinking spirit, the father only looked to admire and rejoice in such a mother for his children ; but when, in a few short years, the death-wind had scattered all her sweet fruit, had stripped the olive of all save one solitary leaf, he found his tree was blighted, his one prized tree was rotten at the core. Yes ; it might well be *said that intemperance was one cause : but when he saw that it had laid its scorching grasp upon all that he had cherished with such sedulous affection, he knew that the hour of his*

that great trial was at hand ; he knew then that when the we have gathered his little ones to the garner of God, it is mercy, and not anger towards him. Her weakened and tired mind reeled and fell to rise no more on earth. It was a piteous sight—that fair and noble ruin, and no true heart of man will pause to blame the lovely being, though all would grieve who knew her, that she had yielded to the strong temptations which her bereavements had conjured up to drive her mad. Too late did the fond husband learn that he had indulged his wife too far. But had he seen earlier, how could

that gentle spirit have framed itself to chiding and restraint ? And now he was alone ; for though she lived, and perhaps sometimes even loved him, and smiled upon her only boy, for years and weeks together she was lunatic and violent, and terrific even to her heart-broken husband ; and after two or three years of patient vigilance and kindest treatment, he gathered up the remnants of his shattered moral strength to consign her to other hands, and bid farewell, as then he thought, not only to the being that had made life worth living, but to peace, and all hope, and all human love. Again he was a wanderer through many lands and continents, and he came no more to the place at once so sacred and so hateful in his remembrance. His little son went with him through the whole world, a sojourner in many houses, in many climes, but child without a mother and without a home.

We need not follow his every step, but hurry to the end—the period of his travels, and to the circumstances of his death at Arlton. We have said that he was wealthy, and that to all who knew the estate which called him owner, it seemed that he was beyond the reach of adverse fortune—and poverty, or even serious loss, he himself had never dreamed : he had been rich. In the earlier years of his married life he

did not wait to be asked ; but so genuine was his delight in his sweet wife he had won, that he had sought out and made professions of befriending all who could claim kindred with her.

He had listened, as one little conversant with business, to the exaggerated statements of the kinsmen of his wife, who might be supposed to know the truth ; and he had, at their citation, entered into partnership with them in the East India trade. He sometimes wondered how plantations of

indigo, and spice, and sugar, could swallow up such vast sums of money, and realize so little profit; but though he had to mortgage nearly all his available estates (and his power extended to the greater part), he never suffered this continuous drain upon his worldly substance to disturb his earthly happiness, still less to divert him from his spiritual duties. Nor was it likely that, to a heart so woe-begone as his had now become, the mere discovery of immense loss could be a very heavy trial: so that when, in his years of wandering, he went to the Indies, whence all this fabulous wealth of which he had heard was to come, he found only too sure proofs that his own real wealth had been irretrievably squandered in speculations, which even he, with his mere common sense and good judgment, would have pronounced unsound, had he been fairly insensed into the concern at the first. On his return to England he wound up all his affairs with promptitude and honour, and found that though he had fallen from the height of prosperity on which his forefathers had placed him, he had still an ample fortune for his simple habits, and his son, if he were only spared, would still rank with the gentry of the land. He could not if he would—but then long before, he would not if he could—return to his once dear home; and being desirous of getting altogether out of his old neighbourhood and old companionship, he spent one day only in his native village, that he might drop his tributary tear upon the new-made grave where his aged rector lay, then passed on to the town of Arlton, in which his cousin, Mr. Drake, had procured for him a home such as he had desired to possess. He relinquished the actual responsibilities of the ministerial work, for he felt he was unstrung, and unfitted for a task which he conceived to be so solemn. He had given the family living, as his father had done, to a needy but exemplary and devoted college friend; and from that time he looked upon his every day, and every talent, and all the rich resources of his mind, as dedicated to the education of his only son, for whom he had no common love,—great as that must ever be in every virtuous mind—but a jealous, fearful, *aching, restless, anxious feeling*, which arose from the sad *history of the mother's dire affliction, and its degrading symptoms.*

BOOK III.

THE SECRET,—A CURSE.

Thaisa :—" A withered branch, that's only green at top ;
The motto, *In hac spe vivo*."

PERICLES.

—" Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright. To have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty nail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant away ;
For honour travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast. Keep, then, the path ;
For emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue. If you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by
And leave you hindmost ;
Or, like a gallant horse fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O'errun and trampled on."

Ulysses, in TROIL. AND CRES.

At which time would I, being but a moodish youth, grieve, be
ninate, changeable, longing and liking ; proud, fantastical, apish,
low, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles ; for every passion some-
g, and for no passion truly anything."—*Rosalind*.



Book Third.

THE SECRET,—A CURSE.

CHAPTER I.

A BRANCH FROM THE WITHERED TREE.

CHARLES BARTON was but five years old when the fatal stroke severed him from a mother's watchful love. For some time previous to her removal he had been kept at a distance, that his early tenderness might not be wounded, the recollection of his mother spoiled for ever, and his own future clouded with the knowledge of her weakness and her fate. When he returned to his stricken home, when he felt the convulsive assurance of despair with which his mourning father bade him welcome, he needed not the confirmation of silent rooms, neglected servants, nor the gentle pity with which all about him attended to his wants and humoured his whims, to tell him that the bright presence of a mother was withdrawn, to meet him no more. He did not ask, for he felt that she was dead; and with all the sincerity of kind intentions, the inmates of the house silently sanctioned the mistake. Once, while walking hand in hand with his father through the quiet churchyard, he wondered that he had never thought before of his mother's grave. He recalled the vehement grief which he had felt when he had stood in the old chancel with that dead mother, and had mingled tears with hers above the grave of his little sister and brother; and now he could not hold from asking to go there, with the sad and lonely parent on his side, to weep anew, and as he thought with heavier reason for those tears, because a mother lay there now. But

the suspicion that she was alive never crossed his mind for years after ; and as his father almost immediately broke up the establishment, and travelled in distant countries, and returned to England with a confirmed repugnance to the old home, and a strong determination to put beyond the immediate circle of his association all that might recall his own great loss, or awaken the boy's curiosity, no opportunity arose in the course of many years, of becoming aware of the actual existence of that mother, or of the sad plight in which her life was wasting away. New friendships drowned the memory of the past. New pleasures, new ambitions, new excitements of every kind, drove out the gloomy bygone of his life. The years of foreign travel, with their dim but crowded pictures, served as a gulf by which he was kept utterly separate from the past ; and if there were occasionally some of his father's visitors who eyed him with unusual interest, or pressed his hand with an unusual warmth, they were too solicitous for his tranquillity of mind ever to whisper or to hint the terrible secret—terrible even to them, but in all probability pregnant with mischief to him, if ever he should come to know it. No intentional restraint was put upon him by his father, neither in regard to his studies, nor in the kind of amusements he pursued. But the habitual sadness of Mr. Barton was in itself a constraint on the gaiety of a lad, and the anxiety which never left his heart for an instant, gave to his countenance and to his tones a wistful, suspicious, nervous expression which, though never misconstrued by his boy into anything like severity, certainly did produce a feeling of shyness and awkwardness at times, which no tenderness of affection on the part of one or the other could wholly charm away. Occasionally this went so far, that the lad thought he was watched, and in the natural resentment arising from such a thought, he would sigh for the unexplored freedom of a public school. He could not, however, fail to be profoundly touched with the wretchedness of his father even at the prospect of a few days' separation ; and many a time, when softened more than usually by the profuse and thoughtful kindness with which every desire was anticipated, he generously vowed that as he was, beyond doubt, the very world to his father,

he would always remain with him, endeavouring to compensate for former loss, and to bind up the wounds of former grief by assiduous and obedient love.

As soon as the new household had fallen into regularity and home-like comfort, the young Charles betook himself with considerable ardour to the studies which were prescribed and presided over by his father. There was no restlessness, or desire for change ; no discontent with the slow progress of the beginnings of knowledge ; no hankering after romance ; no frivolous ambition to grasp the results without the pains of learning. The rich attainments of the teacher's mind were brought out wisely, and as occasion proffered, rather to give interest and pleasing life to the dry routine of the elements, than to bribe the youthful mind into contentment with present hardships on the road to knowledge : so that, as a rule, the student left each branch, each step in that road with reluctance, or, at least, with a kind of regret, for each step had disclosed to him some new treasure or some unexpected beauty which had at once riveted his attention. The same disadvantage which must ever attend domestic education where there is only one child, was manifest in this instance. Neither father nor son were in a position to ascertain with certainty the actual amount of progress made. Both were in danger of over-estimating that progress. The father, though conscientious, and most desirous of suppressing alike vanity and inordinate aspirations, was nevertheless won over more and more to the belief that his only boy would one day take rank with the most solid scholars among the gentlemen of England ; and his vigilant fear on the boy's behalf was quieted by the signs of a plodding, safe, diligent, healthy disposition for study. Anything approaching to fitfulness, or undue elation of spirit, in the prospect or achievement of success, was rare ; but when it did display itself, it was encountered with tolerable firmness—the product of intolerable pain. Considering the peculiar circumstances which surrounded his child with so much more than an average interest, it can scarcely be wondered at that Mr. Barton should have been very loth to part with Charles for the purpose of pursuing an University career ; but whatever selfishness had place in his heart was

owing to his concentrated love on this solitary pledge of a most strangely blighted happiness, happiness that had left him wholly if it were not found here.

Such selfishness could not long withstand the powerful motive of the child's own true welfare, and this appeared likely to be secured by his introduction into the bracing air of life's real conflicts. When Charles had arrived at a suitable age, the question was once for all put in the balance—should they part; and while affection almost frantic pleaded hard for a postponement, if not for an entire abandonment of the scheme, sober judgment summoned the wild affection to order, to submission, to resignation, and the sincere design of securing, at all cost, the substantial happiness of the youth, carried the day. On the evening of the day fixed for the first separation, the two loving ones were alone; and in that quiet which takes possession of the mind when a great resolve, however painful, has once been taken, they indulged each other with the choicest memories of the happy time so soon to close—renewed with unutterable fondness the assurances of their mutual affection, and pictured with a boldness and beauty in which each vied with the other—that happy time, to prepare for which the interval of absence was dedicated. In the youth's mind there sprang up into vivid shape imaginations of brilliant and instant success, which he could scarcely refrain from openly exhibiting, but which would have been as painful to the father, had he known them, as they were pleasing to Charles. Mr. Barton silently folded Charles to his heart, and hastened to a retirement which alone suited his excited and much-tried feelings. In that solitary midnight hour, he remembered all the past. He lived over again, as if for the last time, the agony of former days and nights, the long anxiety of succeeding years. The rapid flight of fears and hope, of prayers and watchings, of sacrifice and self-denial, crowded his mind for one dark hour with the phantoms of a distracted life, and he would fain have prayed; but the very effort to lift up his heart to Heaven seemed to calm him, and rebuke him too. None can ask too much from *the liberal Giver* "who upbraideth not;" but in the very act of asking, he bethought him of the unnumbered mercies which

had come to him before, and with, and since his great trial,—the thought of that dear one, whose preserved life and robust health and genial temper and loving heart and sound mind and high moral character had been to his soul as a perpetual feast ; and his devout frame gave forth the words of thanksgiving and unbounded confidence, instead of anxious and fearful supplications.

The day-dawn found him sleepless but tranquil ; and as he journeyed with his precious charge, even the chaste melancholy of the previous evening disappeared. He was in high spirits, not from that contradiction which is so commonly felt on serious occasions, but from a peaceful conviction that all reasonable grounds for apprehension were wanting, and that the Angel of the Covenant would be the guardian of his child. Charles did not rightly interpret this elevation of spirits in his father, but not for a moment did he suppose it to be a proof that the separation was a trifling matter to such well-known affection. He regarded it as a token of genuine sympathy with his own excited fancy, now that the arena and the contest and crown of life were before him. He read it as the revival of the pleasures of youth, the stimulating ambition of old times, and he glowed with a secret resolve to obtain all the honour which could gratify and repay the ambitious expectations of so good a father. On their arrival at Oxford they found everything prepared as they had wished, and Mr. Barton found additional sources of satisfaction from a circumstance which had not occurred to him before. Several of those who had been his own favourite companions, had so far redeemed the augury which their diligence and fondness for classical studies had given in former days, as to be still content with their fellowships, lectureships, professorships, and the smooth round of cloistered life. Their welcome to the boy sustained the assurances they had often repeated in their letters, that the father had not dropped from their remembrance, nor from their cordial friendship. In the reception which they gave, Charles saw fresh sanction for his lofty designs, and his father gained new confidence in his own moderate hopes. The hour for separation was delayed from the pressing entreaties of these old friends, who would not let their former friend and fellow-

student hurry away as soon as they had got sight of him again after the lapse of so many years. But that hour came at last. The farewell had been spoken days before, and days together, in the looks, and embraces, and halting conversation of father and son—had been spoken, too, where alone it can have value, before the feet of the Eternal Friend.

On his return to Arlton, Mr. Barton's tension of mind gave way at once and terribly ; but his excessive sorrow was of no long duration. He had been so completely under the melancholy influence of his humbling secret, and so wrapped up in the present care of the one child left to him—that he had formed scarcely an acquaintance, and might be said to have returned to a home where there were none to sympathize, none to understand his peculiar sadness ; and at first he was relieved by solitude. Any society but that of his own thoughts would have been insupportable in itself, unless it had possessed sufficient charm to drive those thoughts away. He relapsed, like a long-stretched bow, to the old manner of life from which his tumultuous love for Alice had torn him away. The activity to which that love had introduced and spurred him, had been violent and full of grief towards its close ; it had exhausted the energy of his nature as quickly as it had first developed it. His aptitude for a life of exertion had, as he then thought, been fairly and vainly put to the proof, and he sank back into that delicious, dreamy, pastime existence which so few are ever permitted to taste, even when both studious and wealthy. For some considerable time his conscience slumbered, though other monitors within him brought grievous and heart-rending interruption to his pleasant reveries. It did not trouble him that he was suffering the rust to gather on the talents which God had granted to his keeping, and that the day of account was drawing on, all the more stealthily for that he was guiltily indifferent.

The event which first broke in upon his comparative rest was, in itself, a matter for rejoicing. His Alice, so long dead to him, had at length gone to the new life beyond the grave. The floodgates of memory were burst open and carried away *by the stroke*, and when he arose from the days of his heavy *mourning* he knew how hurtful to his moral courage and

spiritual composure had been the enervating luxury of the last few months. He heard, as in a vision, that sweet voice ringing from afar and bidding him arise and live,—live and labour,—labour in love, to win love,—to keep love,—to evince the love he really felt to the good God of all his consolation. We shall see hereafter by what process of reflection the event of his wife's decease led to a complete revolution of character and in the manner of his outward life. So far as the child was concerned, which Alice, by dying again to him, had again commended to his safe keeping, all his anxiety redoubled, but it did not confine itself to mere brooding and foreboding; it roused him to the exercise of prudence and the earnest tender of counsel as well as to that daily and hourly self-education by which he thought to render himself equal to the task of saving the lad from any and every peril, of drawing him upwards through all obstacles in the face of a protesting world and of baffled demons, right to the very feet of the once suffering and fallen mother, that then from her lips, as echoing the sentence of the Judge, he might claim the welcome—"Well done!"

There was, indeed, a daily increasing necessity for all the watchfulness and fatherly advice which Mr. Barton could give to his son. Every letter that came, while teeming with the evidence of unfailing and dutiful love, betrayed more and more alarming symptoms of that fever of ambition to which all who enter college are liable, and to which they must become seasoned by success or by failure, or by hardly less decided counteractions. Mr. Barton had not fully calculated on the inspiring influence of college society, though he distinctly remembered its power in his own experience. When, then, he gathered from the first faint hints in the letters from his son that he was already in the incipient stage of that academic madness, he was disconcerted. As the intimations increased in frequency and plainness, he felt bound to do his utmost to resist it, well knowing that the utmost effect of his opposing advice would be the moderation, to a slight extent, of the ardour of hope, and thus of the delight in success or the dreaded depression of failure.

CHAPTER II.

THE FALLING BLIGHT.

As soon as Charles had settled down in his rooms, it was nearly as clear to others as it was to his own mind, that he was not easily to be tempted to any course that was openly immoral or injudicious. He was set down, almost without an effort to draw him out, as one part Methodist and three parts fag. Not that he was morose or niggardly ; on the contrary, he was just as gay as a light heart could make him, and as full of humour as a home-bred lad could be without making himself an absolute fool, and the laughing-stock of his companions. But from the first he had taken, as he thought, a very snug and very accurate survey of the whole field,—had familiarized his mind not only with the prizes, but with the tricks by which they were thought to be won, and the competitors who were preparing for the fierce and honourable strife. He had chosen to stake a large amount, perhaps all the happiness of the present passage in his life, on what seemed, to his sanguine temperament, a worthy and safe venture. He measured his competitors, compared his own proficiency with theirs, girt up all the passion and strength he had, and almost died to head them and to win. But many there, who lacked his ardent nature and would have smiled in pity had they looked into his heart and seen the turbulence of his contending feelings, had yet been drilled from infancy almost, just on purpose that they might win the prize of which he had only just caught sight. These took things leisurely—read hard, but made no sign—resignedly enough left their studies when they locked their study doors, and went back to practice their steps, and gallop over the course, with the assurance of men who had no doubt about the result, and who had made up their minds long ago that the prize should be their own. So this poor spirit chafed and wounded itself by prodigious and unhealthy efforts that were foredoomed to failure. His experienced tutor knew that his hope was futile, whatever *might be the strength of purpose and the amount of labour*

he might bring to bear, and he gently insinuated that, after all, it wasn't worth half the trouble—it could only be a nine days' wonder, and nobody in the whole world, out of Oxford, would ever hear, or if they heard by chance, ever care a pinch, who won what prize. But the boy-student had set his heart upon the prize: his fancy endowed it with a value proportioned to the toil he had expended. As to the chances in his favour, he wouldn't take his tutor's word for those—he was a slow, plodding old fellow, good enough in his way, but he had no blood in him—no notion how much a well-born lad could and would sacrifice for any given end, in the way to which there was rivalry or strife; besides, no wonder the grim little grinder should despond if he imagined that his pupil did no more than fill up for a few hours each day the studies which *he* directed and sketched out. "He little knows," thought the aspirant, "and he sha'n't know till it's over, how many hours of the night I have given gladly and unweariedly to study when he thought I was asleep. He'd alter his mind, I rather fancy, if he could just peep in, some of these nights, about two in the morning, and see me with the lamp all trimmed and bright, the heavy little counterpane over the window, and a towel, with pints of water in it, wrapped round my brow to keep it cool. Shade of Mahomet! He'd take me for a Turk, and own that I looked very like winning heaven at the point of the sword." The wary tutor was not, however, altogether in the dark; for, though it was none of his business, and he had no particular inclination for prowling about at two A.M., he knew without telling, that, since the days of Erasmus, there never had been a lad of that stamp at Oxford, with a spice of ambition in his nature, who had not very early in his course played the fool, till he had half killed and half blinded himself, besides blunting his intellects for life, by scanning Greek at two o'clock in the morning.

One morning, as Charles was passing rather in a hurry from chapel to his room, he stumbled on young Malkin—a sprightly youth, though somewhat delicate, and known for a reading man, though nothing very much out of the way, and, *as the examination was only a few days off, it was uppermost as it happened, in both minds.*

"Hallo, Barton, what's up? You look as if you'd been living on guineas for a month—lucky dog! but you shouldn't swallow them, they've given you the jaundice; better spend them, or give them to those who will. What makes you so yellow, and red, and spotty?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; perhaps swallowing too much guineas' worth, for they do go down somebody's throat, in some shape. I feel all right—seedy, you know—ha, ha, ha, didn't get to bed till long after three—such a lark!"

The fibber, and he looked so ghostly and frightened at the fib, that Malkin didn't quite believe him—he knew well enough that Barton had other fish a-frying. So he said carelessly, "Well, I suppose we sha'n't have the honour of your competition next week? There's a good lot going in, I hear; I suppose you won't think of it?"

"But I do," said Barton, thrown off his guard, "you'll see what you shall see."

"What! you mean mischief, do you? Well, I'll give in; not a bad kind of larking, either, though it does make you look uncommonly lemony all over. Are you well up, think you? Mind you don't leave anything out; for I'll tell you a bit of a secret, I'm going in too."

"You? well, what of that?"

"I go in to *win*, old buck; my stakes are too heavy to lose."

"Don't be too sure; others have worked hard when you little thought, and you may find yourself second, for all your stakes are so heavy."

"Oh, I haven't the slightest fear," said Malkin; "I haven't looked at a book for a fortnight, and don't mean to any more till the time comes."

"So much the worse for you and your stake, then; I mean to sit up till I drop, every night this week, and we'll see who'll come off first."

"So, so—ta, ta; do as you say, and I'm safer than ever; for I'll bet you a hundred to one, if you take it in coppers, you'll not be placed at all."

All this was sufficiently mortifying, and ought to have had some salutary effect; for it was well-known that Malkin was

heavily backed, and that he ought to have won at the last examination in a canter, though then there were half-a-dozen men better up than anyone on the list at present. It had only the effect, however, of throwing young Barton into a fever of savage, unprofitable application all day and all night long; thus wilfully stupefying his brain by a systematic cramming, clogging his fine memory with a mass of matter sure not to be wanted, and which he couldn't have digested in time to make use of, even if it had been.

CHAPTER III.

STILL FALLING.

BEFORE the examination commenced, it was plain to the affectionate tutor that the health of his pupil was undermined, and that his whole nervous system was shaken; but the febrile glow was accounted by the young man as a real accession of strength and spirit for the great contest, and as an omen of brilliant success. In the slumbers which he snatched from his precious hours of preparation, he saw his father far off, gazing at him with a dull, almost reproachful look, but he leaped at one bound to his arms, and shouted, "Father, it is mine!" And often did he see, in the visions of the night, a shadowy presence, a form of beauty, an eye of fire, and heard, with swelling heart, a voice of tenderness and depth, bidding him on in his ambition, and conferring a proud reward. The remembrance of his ill-fated mother had never been kept alive by reference and remark. Through the years of giddy childhood and first youth, it had died out utterly; but since the fires of ambition had been kindled, he had often seen her figure in the flames, even in his waking hours. No wonder, then, that in his fitful sleep he should see her in that awful but inspiring, maddening beauty, which had flashed all around her when last he had been lifted to her arms, and had fallen asleep in her bosom. The eve of the contest was sleepless. He had stretched his thoughts too widely to call them home to rest; and in the morning he

rose and dressed himself with languor. Sickness, and headache, and unstrung nerves, and trembling hands, and wandering mind,—all helped to depress his spirits. But he knew that a copious draught of wine would soon set all that to rights. He swallowed the tempting and reviving draught; he would have more, lest the influence of that already taken should pass off too soon; and then, with that strange patience which the soldier feels when all is ready, when nothing remains to be adjusted or altered, all perfectly ready except the word to move—he awaited the summons which was to be the knell of his turgid hopes, and to call his young heart down into the valley of humiliation and even to the slough of despond. There was no trepidation, no leak in that well-seasoned confidence, no misgiving in that firm step and erect bearing, no flinching in that wine-lit eye. The first part of the trial was courageously faced, and there was no failure yet; but it was not to continue thus. In little more than one hour, his mind became anxious, his memory became treacherous, confused, and halting—if it presented him with the right answer, as is likely enough, it was with hesitancy; he could not go on to trust it. He had lost self-confidence; for the spell of the wine-cup had gone away like a vapour. And so he buried his burning face in his hands—he knew that he was lost—he gave one melancholy glance to the calm, inquiring face of Malkin, and rushed from the room in an agony of shame. The tutor had foreseen a result something like this, and he had feared for the sequel. He had written to Arlton to urge Mr. Barton to come and comfort his son; for he was sure he would greatly need it. But even he, with his experience and his lengthened observation of college life, could form but a faint image of that disastrous sorrow which fell upon his pupil now. With the infatuation of his mother, he had nerved himself for a great triumph, had staked his all on one hazardous throw, and when he saw the blank, he gave himself up for lost. The native politeness of his manner, the suavity of his ever-welcome voice, the gentle fervent nature of his feelings, the light laughter and the cheerful smile, *perished in the flames which false ambition had lighted, and in which pure ambition itself was utterly consumed.*

The first outbreak of mortified pride and stinging shame was fearful to behold—too fearful for any heart that had not been overlaid and chilled by long addiction to a studious and retired life. The tutor was sole witness of this scene, where the tornado swept through the soul and laid all waste; but in his attempts to soothe he was helpless as a child,—ay, far more so—for there is no grief which has not been, and may not be again, lessened by the little arms embracing, the little lips smiling up into the furrowed face, or the little eyes weeping in mysterious sympathy.

It was not at Oxford that the father and son met; nor was it immediately after the deplorable occurrence of the examination failure. The son had hurried away from the scene of his disgrace—whither? It mattered little to him, so that he might escape from the dolorous philosophy of his tutor, and the dreaded sympathy or triumph, as the case might be, of the successful Malkin; still more, could he but postpone indefinitely the humbling meeting with his father. He had few relatives, and from the secluded character of his education he had still fewer friends. There was one man towards whom his inclinations rather leaned. He had hardly ever seen him, and then it had been only in a business character. But his perverted feelings now warmed towards him out of pure contradiction. Nathaniel Drake was a distant connection of the Bartons. He was still a young man, but by dint of his well moulded character he had already established himself in the confidence of many noble houses, and had acquired a reputation for sagacity and business habits in the circles of the legal profession, of which he was a prosperous member. Most certainly, whatever might have been the interior disposition of this “solicitor in London practice,” neither the kind of business he had to transact for Mr. Barton, nor the severe, sententious, straightforward manner in which he had always conducted it, were calculated to leave a favourable impression on a young romantic mind. Familiarity with his harsh countenance and tones had not softened the early terrors of the child, who counted him as the particular bogie of his dreams and benighted wanderings. So far from this, that even when *verging on manhood* Charles had regarded his occasional

visits to Arlton as of sinister omen, and always felt relieved at his departure as if he had been the evil genius of his father's house. And, to be sure, Nathaniel's outward man gave no encouragement to the lad to struggle against his early impressions. He might have been taken for a Commonwealth man—and he did descend from that stock. In some respects he was worthy to have been enrolled amongst Cromwell's Ironsides ; but he was a thought too stout for the ranks ; he was more like the great Protector himself. There was a sea-faring air about both his language and his dress, while the vague expression and complexion of his countenance reduced the general impression of a maritime to the more specific character of a pirate. Though little more than forty years of age, he was burly and bronzed, and not only boasted a large untouched harvest of hair in the usual places, but seemed to have cultivated the same crop with a liberal spirit in soil where generally it does not thrive. His nose was not very unlike a lion's-head knocker ; and we speak now not so much of the interesting details of a lion's-head knocker, as of the quantity of hair floating tastily about it. Tufts grew from each nostril, which must have proved greatly trying till he got accustomed to the irritation, as men get over the titillating effects of snuff. That he had got over it was to be concluded from the fact often observed by his clients, that when he really needed a little gentle excitement, he was under the necessity of violently twitching first one and then the other till he made himself red, and his eyes watery. In the little bays, too, at the bottom of the larger gulfs which served him for ears, there were tufts of a sea-weed shape and colour ; and his hands were a sight to see, for the fur or bristles that covered them from wrist to nail (we don't know about the rest) were enough to wear out a pair of dog-skin gloves in a week.

Now, neither do we think worse of Nathaniel because of these peculiarities, nor do we cordially justify, while we make some excuse for, the prejudice which warped the mind of his client's son. He was emphatically an ugly man ; and if his inner man had indeed corresponded to his outer, he would *have been* a bogie indeed, and something of a brute *besides*. To him, then, the wanderer turned with a sort of

perverted instinct. He wanted to be miserable—he had fairly earned the freedom of the wretched, and he knew none who was so likely to secure his morbid wish, as the London lawyer.

On arriving in town, he repaired at once to the Ogre's den, and received at the outset a tolerable sample of what he had expected, and might confidently look forward to. He was curtly received, and as soon as Nathaniel had gained a clue to his farcical errand, he very nearly kicked him out of his sanctum, and told him to be off for a couple of hours till dinner-time, or, if he were afraid of losing his way, he might sit on a stool in the clerk's office, and amuse himself with the interesting process of engrossing. Wisely preferring the former alternative (his choice, however, was rather accidental than wise, for he could have had no idea of the ineffable dulness of an office when the master is within; preferring, then,) the stroll, he very soon succeeded in losing himself, and exhausted more than one of the two hours in the tedious task of finding himself without asking any one where he was. He still had ten minutes surplus time, and being ushered into a dingy but well-furnished drawing room, he began to experience an unexpected difficulty in making out whatever he should find to say to such an uncouth and practical man. But his ingenious and well turned sentences were only just struggling into the first rough draught of his intended explanation, when they were all blown to the winds, like the torn scraps in the office below, by the spirited opening of the door to its full capability of admission. The beaming Nathaniel entered with a lady on his arm who was the very incarnation of affable good humour and downright generous nature. She was on the whole a bulbous shaped lady, but extremely comely, and had a face that could not look sour, and hardly in any emergency sad or anxious or even grave. She was older by a few years than Nathaniel; but her lively disposition, and her general condition, bodily and moral, forbade the suspicion that such was the case. She gave a hearty welcome to the young man, for she had known and almost loved his father; "but then he wasn't (as she said to herself) a proper widower yet," and though she was a widow, and a bewitching

little widow too, with only one encumbrance, she couldn't contrive to fascinate, indeed, she did not try to fascinate—except in her vidual dreams—the afflicted Mr. Barton, and therefore had soon after his departure from Mylden Place, assigned her snug little property together with her little encumbrance and her inconsolable heart to Mr. Nathaniel Drake and *his* heirs for ever.

The alteration in the lawyer's manner of greeting from the morning brusqueness was a fine illustration of the humanizing influences of female society, and a standing advertisement to young gentlemen of leisure and fortune that lawyers in large practice are not at home to them and their vagaries between the hours of ten and four.

The bashful young Oxonian was just about to leave off his perpetual high bred bowing, and preparing to try to stand at ease, when a new goblin started to view, to affright him into (not out of) his propriety. This was no other than Mrs. Drake's little encumbrance ; little no longer, but if anything, taller than her Mamma, and not one-tenth so fat. She did not look as if she could be an encumbrance to any one or anything, not even to the ground she trod, no, nor even to the money-making lawyer, who just doated on her, and that's the fact. She was not specified in the marriage articles at all ; but still he took to her kindly at once, and he had been taking to her more and more ever since. One could hardly venture to say why he loved her so much ; but it certainly was not out of respect to her late father Mr. Boothby, though he could not fail to respect that defunct gentleman, such a well-to-do and acquisitive old gentleman, whom he had helped to hurry off this mortal scene by making his will for him and appointing himself one of the executors. Nor yet was it altogether to be accounted for by the strength of his passion for the widow, for the widow deserved and got all that his nature could afford in that line, and he would have loved her relations in general rather less than more for the fact of propinquity. It must have arisen from something in the girl herself ; it was an instance of those strong affections which *are partly* indebted to violent contrasts for their very existence ; and to any observer so open to conviction as Charles Barton

happened to be at that moment, the unartificial but refined tenderness of the great rough lawyer towards his fragile, blushing step-daughter was irresistible *prima facie* evidence that she was worth knowing, and might turn out worth loving and having all to oneself. Accordingly, the young student began immediately to confound in his own mind the gratitude he had felt for a moment to Mr. Drake for his fatherly gentleness towards the fatherless girl, with a vague jealousy and resentment of his fond and familiar address. He mentally murmured ; " he wished he'd let her alone, and pay his attentions where they were wanted and where they were always due." She approached the stranger as one who had been prepared to welcome a friend, and the very ease and frankness of her manner confirmed an idea which the bearing of the father and mother had suggested, viz., that he must be a much more attractive person than he had hitherto supposed, and mistaken though his notion might be, it served to rub off a little of his rusticity and a good deal of his college awkwardness, setting him free all over, except in his heart, for the rest of the evening.

He shook just a little, it is true, when he accompanied Sarah to the little back room on the second floor, where dinner was laid out for four ; but he contrived to stiffen himself out of his shivering fit before grace was quite said, though that grace was as brief as doubtless it was sincere. If it were not sincere it ought to have been, were it only for the excellent dinner that was now to be discussed. There was no mistake about it—Arlton, at its best, could never have turned it out, not even his father's elegant establishment could have produced a meal so worthy of being eaten, and the whole world, he presently thought, could not have furnished four individuals more worthy of eating it. The substance of the conversation that night would doubtless be found improving if it could be given ; but unfortunately even those who took the least prominent part listened very imperfectly, and though they often tried to recall just a fragment, their endeavours were confused and thwarted as soon as they got through the first ten minutes of the memorable evening. But this much we can assert, that Mr. Charles was growing very hot and disputa-

tious towards ten o'clock, on the utter worthlessness of university education, and the flagrant partiality shown on all occasions in the awarding of splendid prizes to men who were mere creatures, minions, parasites, and that kind of thing. For his part he thought, indeed he was sure, that Home Education followed up by a good course of law-reading under the superintendence of an able practical lawyer, was the best training for a gentleman of fortune, who was destined by his position to take the law into his own hands. The maritime-looking attorney was skilled in the winds and the compass of inland, every-day life, and he soon perceived on this occasion where the wind lay. He rendered the good night which he gave, more cordial and more endurable by the request that the youth would look upon that house as his home while in town, and bring his portmanteau early to-morrow. The door closed, but Charles felt as if it had caught his coat tail, he could hardly manage to move from the steps ; he was sure he had forgotten something, and he was right, for he had left his heart behind him. When he knew that his handkerchief and cane and the crumpled little rose—which he had found on the stairs and stolen from the purest misconception of the person who had dropped it—were all safe, he wondered what could have made him think that he had left something behind, then shook himself off the door-steps and fairly ran all the way to his inn, rushed up stairs at such a pace that the beetle-browed waiter who was lounging about the door winked at his retreating shadow, and knew the young gent had been dining out ; and when he had entombed himself in his dark bed-room, he breathed out furious and contemptuous defiance at Malkin and Classics, and Tutor and Oxford ; snapped his finger at the whole pack of them, and gave himself up to the indescribable, insane joy of his first love. The morning brought with it—reflection, and his father. Reflection came first, and as is nearly always the case after a particularly delightful evening, it was no welcome visitor. He had a vague impression that he had made a fool of himself not only before the astute lawyer, but (far worse) in the judgment of *that sweet Sarah* also. And then his thoughts travelled back, in spite of his over-night defiance, to Malkin and Oxford, to

the lean-faced tutor, and his own frightful failure. Was he, who at that moment might be the standing joke of a thousand of England's noblest and wisest youth; was he the dishonoured candidate;—the humbled, because once presumptuous aspirant; he afraid to look his father in the face; was he the man to win or to attempt to win a prize so rich and fair, so loved and honoured, so self-sustained and clear-conscienced, so innocent, so unpretending and yet so full of charm and wisdom, and even piety? Oh, if he had but conquered in the race, if he had but heeded counsel, if he had but husbanded his strength, if he had but kept the key of his cupboard in his pocket that morning! How different might all have been! Even the bronzed-faced lawyer had seemed to twit him when he said, He supposed *that* examination was about coming on, and he hoped to hear that the son of his friend was placed first; and *she* had added with playful glee, "Oh, yes, you must be first; I would never be anything but first if I were a man." Did she know; was it roguery? Then it was malice, and he hated her; he would not think of her. He wouldn't go near the grim old-looking buccaneer, nor his fat wife, nor his mealy-faced laughter—not he. He'd stay where he was, in bed, in an inn for ever and ever; never go home, never write to his father. He didn't care what happened, it made no difference to him. He wasn't going to be laughed at and bullied, he'd lie first, and he rang the bell for his coffee and toast, as if he meant to haul the landlord and waiter, as well as his breakfast up stairs with the bell-pull.

"Hot water, Sir?"

"Don't want any; bring me my breakfast."

"There's an old gentleman waiting down stairs to see you, Sir, he says he's your father; to that I can't speak; he was or coming up to your bed-room; but not knowing how you might be with him, I wouldn't tell him the number."

"Oh, dear, what shall I do? I daren't meet him. I wonder if he's heard. He must have done. He's been to Oxford, and that scoundrel told him all, and put him on the scent—and—well, but it'll save me the trouble. Heigh, I say, waiter!"

"Yes, Sir."

"You may tell the gentleman the number, and show him up ; but never mind the coffee. I'll come down to it."

And that functionary pronounced the individual inside to be a fool ; for he retained the derogatory conviction which he had too hastily formed on the previous night, that the young spark was very drunk, and would have been all the better for a cup of something hot to settle his stomach, and make him all right for a row with his father.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CANKER AT THE CORE.

IN a few minutes that father entered ; but the beetle-browed waiter would have wondered (though he was a father on an extensive scale himself) to see that sweet glad smile, and to hear that melodious voice—"God bless you, my Charles ; I came on from Oxford last night ; I was afraid you might be sad, and I could not rest till I had seen you. I know you have failed, but I failed when I was older than you ; and, besides, I had all the requisite training. Never mind, my dear boy ; they say—even Malkin says—he was afraid of you, —that if you had not been so afraid of yourself, he would have had good reason for his fear."

"Oh father, don't speak so kindly to me ; it cuts me to the heart. I was so sure—so proud ; I thought how you would rejoice to know that in that little world so dear to your memory your son was the first in the learning you had trained him to acquire and love so intensely. I gave *all* to win, and I lost all. I have no heart to try any more ; it would kill me, or drive me mad. I am not far from it as it is."

"Hush Charles, my dear ; I will not hear you speak thus ; you do not know the pang that makes my heart ache, when you speak so low and look so lost. I love you more for your *failure* than I should have done if you had brought home to *Arlton* the news of success. I would rather my son were still

the humble student who distrusted his own stores of learning till he failed from the anxiety of modesty, than that he should gain an Olympian crown. Hundreds like you have failed, but none so amiably. One only could win. Would you change with Malkin altogether? He has no father—a mother stricken with palsy in her mid-life, with but scanty means of living, and her son is her all; or, tell me, my generous boy, would you have been happy to have robbed the widow's son of that which has brought such comfort to her home, and such proud thanksgiving to her lips? Could you have enjoyed your triumph, when you heard that his heart was broken, and his prospects for all time blasted? No, I know my boy too well."

"I worked so hard, father. It was wrong, I know; but I staked my all, father, and I lost," and he hid his face from the father's gentle smile.

He wrestled with his pride; but he was too shaken to throw it then. He saw, in the darkness of the moment, the old genius of his ambition, and he cowered down away from her reproachful and mournful glance. Oh, it was an hour of conflict in which none might help, and in which he was worsted. His frame had been greatly enfeebled by his unwise night-work at Oxford, and all the powers of his mind seemed now to share in the prostration. No serious illness befel him; but a morbid reluctance to enter into society of any kind, and even into conversation with his father. Mr. Barton was as incompetent as ever to manage such a case; but his unbounded pity went a long way in softening the mental pain which he could not quite understand, and for which all his knowledge suggested no remedy. He watched with the keenest solicitude the quick changes of that variable mood; but he had only one measure to apply to them all. His memory retained the most vivid recollections of one case in all its symptoms; and even had he possessed a large experience in dealing with aberrations of the mind and moral disease, his anxious, timid love would have been sure to refer every symptom in his boy to the dreadful standard of the mother's madness; and thus he was deceived. He suffered his jealous anxiety to be lulled, *because he discovered none of that wild irascible and all-defying fury which had aforetime laid one heart in ashes.*

But, in truth, the melancholy which had fallen upon Charles was hardly a less serious evil ; in some respects it was much worse, for when insanity in its worst forms has seized upon the victim, we may even find comfort in its very excesses, assured that whatever may be the distress occasioned to us by the semblance of agony, the victim has lost the capacity of pain ; the greatness of the suffering has hastened the suffering to an end ; the storm may rage with ten-fold strength, but it has done its worst already—its victim sleeps beneath. At any rate, the sense of submission to a mysterious will is more easily kept alive in this case of extremity—when we reflect that all human effort is vain—that in all the blasphemy, and falsehood, and unbelief, of delirium, there is no sin. The day of sin may, indeed, have set among these lowering clouds ; but there is no sin now. On the other hand, the frailty of this young mind was the result, in some measure, of his own folly ; there was a shade of criminality resting on his unhappy condition, something of poltroonery and unmanliness in yielding himself so soon to the sway of bitter fancies—to sentimental indolence—to that peevishness, discontent, and recklessness, which, if anything could ever justify, it could only be a long life of wear and tear—of a thousand disappointments, each a thousand times more heavy than that which he had just known. Whatever may have been the amount of predisposition to irregular and ill-balanced feelings inherited from his mother, we cannot gain relief by indulging in mere compassion. We know that God had left him a power which might have been, if faithfully cultivated, more than sufficient to counteract the insidious tendency of his mind.

At this distance we can discover much to blame both in the father and in the son, though we may be ready enough to exonerate the one when we remember his youth and physical exhaustion, and to view the lack of wisdom in the other, through the favourable medium of his abundant love. We tremble for the manhood and the immortality of the young man, when we see him so comfortless and crushed by the first rugged obstacle in life ; hardly less, when we see the father nursing the wounded spirit into an unnatural sensibility,

instead of dragging it forth to the bracing air of the world, and the strengthening exercises of duty and trial. If this dotage be suffered in boyhood, how sluggish and useless will be the whole career ! Just for the hour, indeed, as we catch the heart-breaking sobs, we are melted ; or when looking at the vacant, purposeless, mindless expression of that young countenance, we cannot refuse our compassion ; but if it should continue, or if it should be established as an intermittent idiocy, we are sure, in no long while, to regard him with contempt, or, if our pity and love has once been very great, at the most we should feel indignation. Again, although it is not ours to weigh the guilt, or even to assume that there is guilt in the self-abandonment that so often follows early disappointments, and not unfrequently leads to fatal issues, we do maintain that it is not possible for the upright, manly wrestler with daily toil and trial to regard the mere hypochondriac with the same forbearance that he extends to the lunatic. We cannot excuse his follies ; we must call his appearances of wrong-doing by no other name than sin ; and, therefore, we dare not sustain our troubled hearts with the hope of his being held blameless when the life he has wasted is brought to the judgment of God.

One of the heaviest of the accounts which it might be feared this young man would have to render in that judgment, was on the ground that, by nursing his spleen and sullenly refusing the healthful alleviations which social life and individual exertion and devoutness of mind are designed to afford, he laid himself open to the most effective seduction of Satan ; he actually invited the unbelief, and the sloth, and the self-indulgence which even the most vigorous of mankind are hardly able to resist. Often as human nature is self-impoverished by supine cowardice and sickly complainings against fate, we seldom meet an instance in which this moral beggary and weakness of the mind is not hurried on to the verge of absolute ruin by recourse to social and solitary excitements which the strong man need not seek, indeed, but durst not, if he did. It would seem as if the self-abandoned became abandoned of God ; and that forthwith the demon crawled into the desolation, made the waste place his home, and care-

fully impressed the brand of an ownership which neither God nor the victim disputed.

None could help the sinking youth but God—(the father had not skill even to discern how portentous was the silence and listlessness he witnessed)—but the proud heart then, and long afterwards, rejected the only helper of his great need. He might, perhaps, have roused himself had his father admonished and sternly reproved him for his folly ; but the voice that did speak to him from the cloud was a strange one to him, and he gave no heed. Slight fever accompanied this inward waning ; but the bodily ailment was brief and unimportant, scarcely begetting any unusual fear even in the father's mind, while the treachery of the inner conflict escaped all notice, and was left to its deadly consequence—a life-long curse. Need we say that the invitation to remove to the house of the Buccaneer lawyer and his bulbous-shaped wife and mealy-faced daughter, was disrespectfully declined—that is, without even the pretence of an excuse, by Mr. Charles. The portmanteau remained where it was. The landlord secretly rejoiced that so likely a customer was on the sick-list of his establishment, especially when the found, as he reported to his nervous wife, that there was nothing in the world the matter with him, but some kind of love affair ; while the beetle-browed sympathizer with juvenile indiscretions generally, felt more and more drawn out to the youth upstairs—(his own propensity, even in mature life, leaned—as you carelessly looked on—in every direction, like Chesterfield steeple ; but like that celebrated eye-sore, the appearance was deceptive, for, in fact, the exposure of his south-west aspect—having been much in the sun in his youth—had shrunk his moral nature out of the perpendicular of rigid virtue)—but if he was drawn out towards young Hopeful, he became positively hostile to the sad-looking, soft-speaking father, and never lost an opportunity of running against him on the landing, or treading vindictively on his toes, or mislaying his coats and his sticks, or of making hideous faces behind him at the bed-room door, when he had ushered him in. So indignant did he feel with *old Prim* (as he called him) for making such a piece of work *about his son's getting drunk at a party, that if the illness*

had been prolonged beyond a few days, he would most certainly have made Mr. Barton's corpse a stepping-stone for himself to the gallows. But all this came to an end even sooner than the landlord had feared, and long before the waiter had heated himself sufficiently to slay old Prim as he stood.

The invitation to both father and son had been more than once renewed by Mr. Drake ; but as Mr. Charles positively refused to go, Mr. Barton had no option, and covered the incivility of his son with the best excuses he could frame. Nathaniel was not a man to be civilly bowed out of anything on which he had once made up his mind ; and, as he could not gain his wish by courtesy, and hardly liked to try the power of attorney, or personal violence, he resorted to crooked ways that he might put himself and his friends in such a relative position as would most conduce to the young man's peace of mind. For he had learned from Mr. Barton the state of matters at Oxford, had recalled his own jokes about Charles being the prizeman, and had bitten large dents in his lips through vexation, both with himself and his little encumbrance, for the pain they had innocently inflicted on his disappointed young friend. Sarah was overwhelmed with self-reproaches—(these were the only reproaches she ever got)—and in her simplicity, and from a feeling of friendship (as she said), she had actually penned an explanation with an irresistible little prayer for Charles's forgiveness and undiminished esteem, tagged on in a postscript. But the Buccaneer didn't like the look of the thing at all ; so he kept it in his pocket, for he did not wish her to know that he could find it in his heart to say *No* to anything she wished to do.

They do say that first impressions are generally right ; there is no doubt they are remarkably strong. First impulses are not, however, always so trustworthy, as none understood better than Mr. Drake ; but it would have been well if he had omitted his usual caution in this instance, and acted on his own first impulse, which was to send Sarah's note ; for he felt sure if he were a young fellow like Charles, he should get no end of medicine both for body and mind out of a sweet little *billet* like that ; but he did act with his usual caution.

and so the fantasy of dislike still made sport with the gloomy Charles, and something like wounded delicacy and pride shut up the maiden's heart against the forlorn but rude young man.

CHAPTER V.

SAGE SCHEMES.

MR. BARTON and Mr. Drake laid their heads together, the one all ear and the other all tongue. Charles was the theme, and his dispirited state of mind furnished the business material of their conference. Unwilling as the now truly widowed father must naturally have felt to consent to any arrangement which should separate him from his only child, the solid good sense of the lawyer saw the necessity of such a separation, at least for a time, and with a sturdiness too much for Mr. Barton to contend with, he urged that Charles should continue in London—should take apartments in the purlieus of the law region—should commence a course of reading under his (Mr. Drake's) direction, and, if it seemed to suit his mood or help him to a heartier and healthier state of feeling, he might go through the whole routine, and (as Nathaniel was fond of pointing out to the shabbier clerks in his office) become a judge of the land.

Mr. Barton had no particular weakness against which this master-piece of strategy might be supposed to have been plied, but his old good sense confirmed the representations of his relative on the desirableness of the youth's shaking off his college connections, and forming new ones in which it was less likely that rivalry and ambition would lead him astray.

"He'll see the world, you know, my dear friend, and be seen by the world; and if I know anything at all of the world, and I flatter myself—but never mind that now—I say if I or you know anything of the world, both of us must be pretty confident that, considering his expectations and good looks, the world will take him by the hand, pat him on the head, put him into a good opinion of himself; in short, make *a man of him*, and then I'll send him home again. What do *you say, Barton?*"

It certainly did appear on the whole a desirable experiment, and should Mr. Charles appear at all manageable in the matter, it would be much better, his father thought, than taking him to Oxford again, to endure fresh mortification, or allowing him to go down to Arlton and mope. It was not, however, without a singular sense of disappointment and misgiving, that he remarked the instant and hearty assent of Charles to an arrangement which would interpose so great a distance, and such long intervals between them, and which, with all its possible advantages, was pregnant with undoubted and formidable dangers. To the young man himself, it was a mystery why he should so readily adopt a plan for the details, of which he felt no particular inclination, and in which, at the first glance, he saw little else than annoyance, notwithstanding his previous moral essays on the advantages to a country gentleman of that identical course. He was thankful enough for any plausible excuse for returning no more to college; and he thought if he could quietly do anything in the law line, it might help to put a better face on his earlier failure, and make him feel a little more at ease in the presence of his parent. He did not sound his feelings any deeper than this at the time; but there were other depths of motive which the first throw of the lead had not reached, and it was reserved for the shrewd maritime relative to discover, that in spite of all his coolness and affected estrangement, there was a feeling right down at the bottom of his heart which sufficiently accounted for his instantaneous approval of the proposed experiment. That feeling had been so obscured by his petulant mood as to escape his own view; but then, though he was not such a great deal younger, he had not lived one quarter as long as Nathaniel, and he was not possessed of such a bunch of keys as the lawyer rejoiced in for unlocking the secrets of the human heart.

If he had been suddenly challenged with a lurking fondness for Sarah Boothby, he might have coloured up; but the blush would have been as much owing to vexation as any less unamiable weakness. Uppermost amongst all his fallacies, and most fallacious of them all, was the idea that he now *scorned and hated* the gentle maiden he had dared to love.

He had doubtless done his very best to hate her, or to persuade himself that he did so, by fabricating the vilest falsehoods about her to his own mind ; but the very pains he took to thrust her image and her influence from his heart showed how deeply lodged had been his first impressions. There was no necessary connection between his reading law with the father and his finding occasion for the display of his contempt (love ?) towards the unoffending daughter ; but there did rise to his agitated fancy a series of accidental encounters and set dinners in which his revenge would be gratified, by showing plainly how good-temperedly he could endure her society for Nathaniel's sake, and how little regard he entertained for her on her own account. The inflated opinion of his own merits, which had first been suggested to him by the almost officious kindness of that worthy family, very speedily settled down into habitual conceit ; and he was about to enter the great world with that most serious disqualification for success in such a sphere—the remembrance of public disgrace combined with insufferable vanity.

All preliminary matters being adjusted, the serious difficulties of the step began to make their appearance in connection with the question of lodgings ; but even this difficulty was overcome by Charles himself deciding that he would not take chambers, like other candidates for the ermine, but just settle down as near the sacred precincts as he could, without being actually mixed up and confounded with the profession ; for, secretly, he laboured under a fear that, if he tried to insinuate himself into the immediate society of the Temple, the Templars would soon find him out, and publicly drum him out into the common ranks of their *clientela* ; and he had become exceedingly nervous on that score ever since he had drummed himself out of Oxford, and afterwards out of Mr. Drake's family circle. As near, then, as he could get to this forbidden paradise—as near, also, as he could get to that particular quarter of paradise where Mr. Drake (not to speak of Sarah) resided, without falling under any obligation to hang out a sign to show that he was of the law—so near did Mr. Charles establish himself for his new course of life.

CHAPTER VI.

MEPHISTOPHELES THE LESS.

He had a man up from Oxford who knew his ways, just to put him to rights ; and as he happened to be fully aware of the extent to which this man was in the habit of robbing him, he thought it better to retain him in his service than rust himself in the hands of a London valet, of whose appropriating habits he could know nothing beforehand, and might find after awhile both undiscoverable and immeasurable. So Mottram was duly installed in an office in which for some time he had nothing to do but amuse himself and improve his mind ; whilst the extent of his opportunities for self-indulgence and self-aggrandisement was such as to reconcile his well-bred soul to a lengthened separation from his beloved and profitable Oxford. The farewell between father and son had been spoken. A momentary pang told the young heart how great was the loss he was about to experience ; a long dull grief, that no hope appeared to relieve, bespoke the intensity of that love which had once been divided among so many, and was now all concentrated in one. There was a kind of relief to the mind of Charles in being thus left to himself ; but, on the whole, his state of feeling harmonized with the outside world. It rained as if it intended never to leave off ; and as he lingered at the window, peering across the narrow street, between the files of rain-drops, as straight and as heavy as grenadiers, he felt the force of the resemblance between the weather and his own fortunes and troubles. It might, he muttered, be extremely beneficial or otherwise, as it turned out ; but it was very disagreeable, without a doubt. Life at that moment was at a discount ; and he could not strike out any better diversion than calling up Mottram, and making him talk, while subjecting a bundle of quills to a curious tentative process, which might, for anything he knew, result in a bundle of indifferent pens.

The young gentleman's man was accordingly summoned. He was *rather longer* in making his appearance than was ab-

solutely necessary to reach the door of the first-floor front, and the master almost managed to smile when he understood the reason (and he deduced it without any intentional assistance on the part of the individual he had summoned). The fact was, and Charles suspected it, and presently knew it, that Mottram had been very unnecessarily, but very quietly, re-arranging the contents of a wine-hamper in a dark little room on the same floor ; and when he heard the unexpected summons, he set himself to calculate how long it ought to take a man of his years to climb from a cellar-kitchen to a first-floor front ; went up the several steps mentally, while he was wiping his mouth on his coat-skirts and flattening his wiry hair with his hand. But it is a difficult problem to calculate. He had got, in his imagination, to the last step on the stairs, but he was afraid of being too soon ; the draught made him sneeze, or his miscalculation would have been even yet more palpable. Mr. Charles betook himself to his pen-making with precipitation, as the handle of the door rattled in the grasp of the hesitating gyp ; and he hoped, by the aid of such occupation, to suppress the smile which was still creaming on his face, but which he felt to be indecorous in one who had just parted from his father, and altogether unsuited to the character of one who had just passed through such heavy trials, and had made up his mind to misanthropy.

With a lame start, he acknowledged the presence of his servant, and exclaimed, with a tone of surprise :—" Oh, Mottram, it's you, is it ? Well, what do you want ? "

" I thought you rang for me, sir."

" Did I ? Well, I believe I did—I don't know what for, though—were you busy about anything ? Better finish what you were doing till I think of what it was."

" Very well, sir ; I wasn't particularly engaged—just arranging a few little matters about dinner, down in the kitchen."

" Stop a minute—is it raining yet ? "

" Like anything, sir ; it's pouring in at the cellar window like a mill-stream—at least, it was just now when I came up—in fact, it was as much as cook and me could do to mop it up as it came in—perhaps she'll not get through it if I leave

her just at present—so I think I'll go, sir, if you don't want anything just now."

"Well, go—no, wait—I can't go out; just let me have a sample of that wine that came this morning; I feel uncommonly fusty, it will liven me up, perhaps."

"Directly, sir."

"Is it a good tap?"

"Yes, very—that is to say, it ought to be at the price;" but things were looking awkward for the culprit, and he shuffled out of the room, with a hint that he would taste two or three bottles before he brought a sample in, such as he could cheerfully recommend to his master; "and so," reasoned the subtle Mottram, "he'll think it's that that makes me smell." Upon his return, the report and the bottle were brought to the table simultaneously, and they were accordant with each other. Both were favourable; but if testimony had been wanting, it would have been found in the sunken level of the contents of the bottle, and in the vinous odour of Mr. Mottram's person—for he was no mean judge of flavour, although he did rather over-do it in bulk.

"Capital—first-rate—don't you think so, Mot?"

"Why, yes, I think so; but I hardly got a fair taste. I always like to taste twice, and wait a minute or two between; it's the only way to judge properly. Try another glass, sir?"

"Yes, fill away, and have one yourself—two, if you like—it's capital, it does one good in a fit of the dumps. I hate rain, don't you, Mot?"

"Yes, sir, because *it's water*—never could abide water, sir—can't exactly make out what good it is, unless it fills the grapes, and makes beer fluid."

"I'll be sworn for you; you never spoke a truer word in your life. By the way, Mot, now what did the men say about,—you know, my indisposition? Tell me the worst; it does me good, nettles my pride—I can stand it now, be it never so bad. Wine's the ticket for putting fight into a man. Had Malkin gone when you came up?"

"He had been away a day or two, and come back."

"Oh, to be sure—he'd been to tell his mother—good boy—"

I think I see her, and him too, with his make-believe off-hand fun, saying he hadn't looked at a book for a fortnight—I don't believe a word of it—do you, Mot?"

"Not a word, sir; indeed, if you won't think it betraying confidence, sir, I can take my body oath, he never went to bed at all for I don't know how long, and only slept at chapels, and as soon as the examination was over he went to sleep like a tortoise, and we couldn't get him waked for a couple of days, and then, why they do say—some do—he went to see his lady-love, a milliner, or something of that sort; but for my own part I think with you, sir, it was a case of apron strings; for I have heard said that he has an old cripple of a mother, a low person, somewhere down in the country. It's a crying shame, sir; such fellows ought to go to Cambridge, or else to the beggarly Scotch. It's ruin to a University of gentlemen to have such scum hanging about, and taking the best of everything; and as for gentlemen's gentlemen, they're no good at all—that's what I say."

"Well, but you don't say what the men said about me—did they think I turned soft?"

"O no, sir, quite the other way, believe me; it was all the talk, how that if you'd only have taken a little of something to prime you—for you're far from strong, sir, as anybody can see—you'd have beaten Malkin by a whole length."

"Ah, but I did take a glass or two of wine, and it was that which floored me."

"Don't believe it, sir—I ask pardon; but you should have had a bottle; and if I'd have been by, sir, I'd have made bold to see you had it before you stirred a foot. A little wine's worse than none all the world over, if you mean to do anything worth while; and, besides, your constitution requires it."

"I rather think it does, Mot—I'm anything but strong, as you say—nervous, and soon out of spirits. I think you may fetch another bottle, I want to see which is best. We'll call this brand 'Malkin,' and if the next proves better, we'll call it yours."

"Thank you, sir, I'm sure."

The absence was not remarkable for its length, but it was

deservedly remembered by one individual on account of the great amount of private business he transacted in the wine trade, while overtly fulfilling the master's command ; and if we are to apply to the second bottle the standard which was declared so trustworthy in the case of the first, we must report in this place, that the wine now produced was worthy of being "the own peculiar" of such an eminent connoisseur—for, like all choice wines, its value being in the inverse ratio of the quantity, it merited the highest esteem from the immense loss which the bottle had sustained in the process of uncorking. In a wonderfully short time, notwithstanding, the second bottle made its appearance, and we need hardly add, its disappearance was facilitated by its diminished contents, and because the second bottle always takes more of it than the first to get an idea of its quality and bouquet. But if it vanished from the bottle, the wine seemed to leap, as at a conjurer's Presto, right away into the brain and eyes of both master and man, lending new brilliancy to the sarcasm of the one, and a maddening gaiety to the spirits of the other. Mr. Charles was speedily exhilarated to that degree, that Mottram could not refrain from the observation that Mr. Barton would give his little finger to see his son so much better, taking a sensible view of things and of life ; and the presuming valet, whose collectedness of mind no hitherto tried quantity of such wine as that could ever entirely confuse, began to feel the stimulated pulse of his master with the view of seducing him back to the banks of the Isis, where all that was most charming to the tastes and habits of a born gyp might be found, and where he had left his loyal heart when summoned to the foggy region of the Thames. His knowledge of London life, like his opportunities of acquiring it, was rather slight—but what little he possessed was discomfiting to a man who had hitherto felt no necessity for admitting a partner either to his bosom or to his projects of self-enrichment—but on that very morning, not once but three times, he had quailed under the eye of a cook who had peeped through a chink in the back-room door, had heard him cough spasmodically in his handkerchief—and who swore she'd tell the gentleman if he didn't go shares—a cook, too, who had on

the preceding evening given unmistakable evidence of a weakness still more amiable, much more excusable, but not less distasteful to Mr. Charles's body servant. Need we name that weakness? We fear that if there are any who did not know Mr. Mottram personally, they would be disposed to think they did not require telling; but those who have carried with them through life a mental portrait of that vinous man, as he once was with his slovenly habits in the kitchen, and all his disdain for plain cookery, will indeed be astonished when we tell them that it was love—yes, LOVE—not all untold, but unreturned—a virtuous passion into whose snares plain cooks are very prone to fall. It was high time, then, that something should be done, and the opportunity of Mr. Charles being in such spirits was seized upon for the doing of that something. *I've half a mind to throw up this concern, Mot—declare off—stuff all these books in the fire—fry pancakes out of the mutton skins—cut the quills to tooth-picks, and hang you out of the window with a placard in your hat—'Apartments to Let;'" and he laughed, and the man laughed, and the man followed up his laugh by saying:—

"Well now, that's something like; I always knew you had it in you, sir; and I say it's a sin and a shame for a young gentleman of your parts to mew yourself up in an out-o'-way place like London, whereas, sir, you might lead, and be the rage of all the best lot at Oxford—besides (in a soberer tone) beating the scummy fellows at their own play, and having your revenge out of Malkin and the rest of them. Take my advice, Mr. Charles; I've not lived all these years—(eh, deary me, and they're not a few)—a college life, but I should know what's what and who's who. Let me pack up your traps—we needn't mind the wine; I know a cook—a spongy, large barrel of a cook, who'll take that off your mind; for between you and me, sir, I've caught her more than once, a long way from the spit and rather too near the little back-room door. Say the word, Mr. Charles. 'There is a tide in the—' I forget the rest, but it means, 'Now or never.'"

"Hold, good Mot, you are incautious, precipitate, I fear. *Let that bottle alone, you scamp! I declare you haven't left a glass in it.*"

"I couldn't very well, sir, for you didn't give me the chance. Shall I replenish?"

"Yes, but mind, if you don't bring it full this time, I'll do as I said, and hang you out of the window."

"Shouldn't object in the least, Mr. Charles, if it would give you any satisfaction; I live but to serve you, dear sir, and if you'll only go back to Oxford, I'll hang myself out o' window till the watch cut me down."

This time, there was less direct evidence of Mr. Mottram's private indulgence—for the bottle was full—but his master resigned himself to his luxurious reveries, good-humouredly ignoring the fact that he distinctly heard two corks drawn instead of one, and offering no opposition to the very humane wish of his servant, to fly (if he could) to the assistance of the ladies in the kitchen, who had whispered frantically upstairs, that they were almost swamped to death. Mr. Mottram was not the person to refuse aid to the fair in their distress, provided he were well fortified against damp and coquetry; he accordingly hastened from his master's eye to his master's wine, and thence to the succour of the alarmed and exhausted cook. With such an ally as that which he levied in the little back room, there could be no doubt that ultimately he would drive the enemy down the sink, as fast as that enemy had before come down the spout. We leave him to his magnanimous efforts in that humbler sphere, and retrace our steps that we may reckon up the amount of mischief he had wrought in his master's mind.

To describe the precise course of thought which rolled and rambled in Charles's brain, would be as difficult to us, to say the least of it, as it was to him next morning to recall the successive steps by which he had passed from an erect posture at the front-room window, watching the rain, to a supine position outside his bed, hardly able to see either the rain which still drizzled, or anything else. But we should do injustice to Mr. Mottram's superior acquirements in rhetoric, if we omitted to state that it had produced a very great degree of restlessness, a sense of self-dissatisfaction, an extraordinary physical thirst, a strong tendency to dozing, and, finally, a *heavy sleep*, peopled with frightful dreams. Even

when the morning came, and after it had got on its journey within a stage of afternoon, the reappearance of the manservant with brandy and tea—not for choice, but for mixture—revived the influence of his yesterday's reasoning with unabated force.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ANGEL VISIT—UNAWARES.

THE very fog had got the jaundice, and the young debauchee was not very far from having it, too ; so that everything immediately about him conspired to make him wish himself anywhere but where he was, and the Oxford plan loomed most distinctly on his perturbed mind for the space of a full hour. Other thoughts, about that time, began to make their presence felt, undefined and shadowy, but just clear enough and dense enough to hide Oxford from the view. In short, he turned maudlin, thought about his father, trembled lest the maritime lawyer should take it into his head to drop in, and then—yes, and then—he thought tenderly of the mealy-faced Sarah till he cried like a baby, and, as he looked through his tears right into that mealy face, he thought it was angelic ; and so it was at that moment, covered with natural confusion at the spectacle before her. She had never seen a man crying. Nathaniel never gave way to such nonsense, and she was ashamed, and felt unspeakably awkward, to find herself face to face with the living reality of her favourite dreams ; and to find such a contrast between the visions of the night and the actual man of eleven o'clock in the morning—in deshabille and tears.

How this *contretemps* came to pass, we cannot explain as fully as might be necessary to understanding and excusing it, but thus much was the result of putting this and that together ; the apologies and assurances of dear innocent Sarah, the angry subsequent expostulations of Charles, and the somewhat backward confessions of the ingenuous Mr. Mottram. It appeared that this dove had been sent out of the maritime lawyer's ark, not to find but to carry an olive-branch from Mrs. Drake to the suffering Charles, in the shape of a soothing

invitation to dinner on that very day. Now, it was not the proper thing to do ; but, as Sarah had received no special instructions, and, moreover, was accustomed to wait for an answer in most cases of errand-going for her mamma, she thought proper to reply to the worthy servant's inquiry as to "Any answer, Miss?" that "she thought there might be;" and that worthy having forgotten the transfer of his master to the front room, which he had both suggested and superintended, ushered her straight a-head into the room within a yard or two of the pondering and weeping youth.

It was a shocking state of affairs to all concerned. To Mottram it looked like a month's warning when he entered the bedroom, and found that Charles must have gone in his dressing-gown into that very room—"Oh, it was 'orrid!" Mr. M. in after life often found occasion to observe, "and made him feel as if he deserved to be hanged." But the principals in this strange interview! Sarah ought to have turned right about face and vanished instantly; but she hadn't been properly drilled, and so there she stood, like a beautiful statue in neat apparel, as rigid and nearly as white.

"Good heavens, Miss Drake! I mean, Miss Sarah—what's your name—go away, do. What on earth do you want?"

"Some mistake, Mr. Barton, as you perceive; never mind, it's unlucky, and there's an end of it," said Sarah, recovering her presence of mind, and bridling up a little; for she could not do it very well, however she tried. "I brought a note from mamma, and, as I thought there might be an answer, I waited, and your ridiculous man showed me in here. Good morning, sir. We shall have no need to recur to, or even remember this scene, if you please," and she courtesied her slim little self swiftly through the still half-opened door, almost into the embrace of the appalled Mottram, then fled like a ghost at cock-crow down the stairs—up the street to her own home. One half of her flight was shared at some distance by the remorseful serving man. Not that he had any motive for following her; but he had every conceivable motive for following her example, for he felt of a truth that he durst never show his face again to his master:

and if he'd only brought his hat and his wages along with him, he would have been found next morning in his old haunt on the banks of the classical Isis. As it was, however, he had no resource but to roam up and down like a maniac for two or three hours, in the course of which he was greatly afflicted, like other insane persons in similar circumstances, with an anxiety to know the time every ten minutes ; and to relieve that anxiety he went in to inquire at every turn in every street where he could find one of those places in which the public of that day were accommodated with the knowledge of what was o'clock, until he recovered his would-be frame of valour, and wended his way home, prepared to receive his doom with the patience of one who hadn't deserved it.

He was met on his return with no loud reproaches ; but his punishment was hardly less severe, that it came to him from the evident and excessive distress of his generous young master, whom he found more than half crazy with vexation, scratching whole sheets of foolscap with wild self-rebukings in a letter to the guardian of the insulted lady. But "Time and the Hours," and the subtle servant man, and a bottle of the very best wine, brought sensible relief to the distraction of Charles, and though it did not altogether amount to a positive consolation, there was enough to soften him down so far that he could pen the following epistle to Mr. Nathaniel Drake :—

MY DEAR SIR AND MUCH VALUED FRIEND,—

"I regret that a pressure of engagements will deprive me of the pleasure of joining your amiable family circle this evening ; but I hope an opportunity will arise in the course of a few days of which I may avail myself, for the purpose of saying farewell to those from whom a sense of duty to my country and myself will compel me soon to separate, perhaps, for ever.

"I need not, I am sure, my dear Sir, tell you how gladly I would have put myself under your guidance, could I have reconciled such a step with the admonitions of conscience, and *the strenuous* advice of valued friends, that I should return *and complete* my college course.

you well know what an effort it must have cost a sensitive like mine, to form this resolution after all that has ; but I trust you will give me full credit for sincerity, I say that I have been induced to this change solely by my view of overcoming the little weaknesses of a disposition that is far too much given to change. I feel that I must fight for the battle of life ; and I know no better disposition for a temperament such as mine, than renewing that on the field of disaster.

“Yours very truly,

“CHARLES BARTON.”

As far as we can learn, there was a slight difference between Mr. Drake's reflections on this charming epistle, and the sentiments we feel disposed to put forth : our view is exceedingly simple, and we would commend it to general adoption. That either Mr. Charles was so much given to change as to have suddenly taken up the character of a liar, or his night's debauch, together with his morning's reflection, had so far besotted him, that he actually believed that he was telling the truth. We confess a leaning to the latter alternative for two powerful reasons. In the first place, the surrender of the conscience to the dominion of drink is a much more common occurrence, and so much more probable than the violent rupture of truth-speaking habits—the unmaking and loving of a lie. Then, secondly, when a man comes afterwards (the wine having lost some of its power) to put the matter before Charles in the light in which he had tried to put it to Mr. Drake, he felt very much disposed to charge that respectable man with having altered the tenor of the letter so as to make the writer ridiculous ; on these grounds, we are disposed to thrust the blame of the unmaking on the bottle, wherever the blame of the bottle may be to lie, which is no present concern of ours. We are not in a position to state with authority what were the feelings of Nathaniel on the first perusal of this apparently unexceptionable letter ; but we cannot be far wrong in supposing them with those of a griffin, who should be called to meet the great trial of seeing the gold he had been set to guard.

deliberately melting itself, and flowing irrecoverably in every direction. For if the antique portraits of those interesting guardian angels be correct, they certainly must be held to have been the prototype and model after which Mr. Drake elongated and twisted his bronzed features on the receipt of this strange communication from the son of one who had been, once on a time, his best client.

Be this as it may, we know that he almost instantly be-thought himself of his great coat, and at the same time made up his mind to try a little of that wholesome terrorism which he had often wielded with beneficial results ; and to this end he deemed his personal presence essential, although there was more than one eager suitor dangling his legs fretfully on a high stool in the outer office.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PIRATICAL VISIT.

If the quiet intrusion of the morning had produced such consternation, it was fairly matched in this respect by the obstreperous inroad which the Griffin made in the afternoon. There was no time for putting things away,—and indeed, the fright of the young man drove all prudence to the winds,—so that there was the palpable “pressure of engagements,” an empty bottle and a full one, and a half glass besides, standing ready to confirm the high opinion which Mr. D. had already been shaping in his own mind on the subject of Mr. Charles’s trustworthiness and solidity of character. Matters were sufficiently embarrassing, and the first few sentences spoken gave little prospect of amendment.

“Hope I don’t intrude ; not busy now, are you ? How do ye do ? Finished all your engagements ? Because, if you haven’t, I’ll wait ; my time’s no consideration. Shall I help myself ?”

“To be sure, Mr. Drake, by all means.”

“Thank ye all the same, but I won’t ; never drink till I’ve dined. Come, my boy, out with it ; what’s the matter. Who, in the name of goodness, are the valued friends that have been

g you back to Oxford? Where are they? Let me
1."

believe, Mr. Nathaniel, I'm the valued friends alluded
naster's letter; and I flatter myself—"

ou, you blackguard? Be off with you, or I'll throw
own the stairs. Are you going? Shut your mouth, and
.. " And the insulted friend fell below par considerably,
n his own esteem; but his head leaned thoughtfully
t the keyhole on the outer side of the door, for he felt
l a right to know whatever might be said to affect his
interest in Mr. Charles's future movements.

ow, Charles, you don't mean to tell me that you've been
ng to that villain ("Hem!" *outside*) of yours, with all his
p nonsense, fuddling yourself till you haven't a will of
wn, and letting this ass bray you out of all your good
ions? You would have him from Oxford—that was all
ough; but I told you he'd be of no use to you here.
v that kidney of old; and I tell you they won't thrive
ere but at Oxford; and they know it, too, and they
leave it but for a purpose."

it he is a genuine fellow, and very fond of me, I know;
at's something."

s, likely enough; I don't doubt it. Why, I'm fond of
yself; and if I'd been brought up in the gyp line,
no living master I'd rather serve than you. It's
l: it comes spontaneous from the menial heart to love
master as you. But what's that to you; it's your due;
io'll tax your bill, I want to know?"

ell, but Mr. Drake, it isn't the thought of a moment—
sing whim, believe me. I've made up my mind on the
, and, much as I regret—"

1, bother the regrets—we'll suppose all that; and then
n take it for granted into the bargain, that I've made
mind on the matter; and I flatter myself—but never
hat, just now. I've made up my mind, Mr. Charles,
is it. Here I am, and here I stay. I have appoint-
for every quarter of an hour in the day for a week to
but the mountain won't go to Mohammed—you know
it. Here I am, and here I mean to stay, till you give

me your word of honour as a gentleman, that you won't budge from London for three months to come ; and so, if you've no objections, I'll remove my great coat and my boots, and if you turn sullen, and won't give me anything to eat, I'll send that scoundrel of yours to fetch my dinner in his hat—only he looks too hungry to trust ; (“That’s a lie !” said the keyhole, vehemently ;) or if you like to turn rational, go wash yourself, and put a clean shirt on (there’s nothing like a change of linen for clearing the intellect,) and come along with me ; we’ll discuss a haunch of venison, and as much wine as you like, send Oxford to the right about, and dance old Mother Boothby (Drake, I beg her pardon), into ecstasies before morning—not to speak of Sarah. Come along, my lad ; you’re not unloved and deserted, and all that sort of thing. Why, if that crop-eared scamp loves you, why shouldn’t we ? There’s Sarah been crying all afternoon with vexation, that her true knight has turned false, and won’t come to dinner.”

“Ah, Mr. Drake, then you don’t know what happened this morning ?” And the gallant knight did unwittingly turn traitor by relating in brief the event of the morning call ; but it only shook Nathaniel’s hairy face as a wind shakes the forest, for he laughed as if he would never get over it, and joyously swore that his darling should never hear the last of it. But the conscience-smitten youth begged so imploringly that he wouldn’t allude to it for the world, that Nathaniel half wickedly promised, as he said, “Never fear me, Charles, I love her too well to hurt her. But I see you’re getting round ; come, there’s a man, pluck up heart ; put on a clean shirt, and you’ll feel as brisk as the little deer whose savoury haunch is at this moment spinning round merrily at my kitchen fire.”

There was no resisting such a combination of firmness and good nature, and Charles retired to his dressing-room with the fit of the blues pretty well gone, whence he emerged by-and-by, with all the self-possession and dignity of a clean frilled shirt and other most irreproachable and comely garments, and a serious resolve to be jolly for once.

CHAPTER IX.

GENIAL SHOWERS.

DURING the journey to Nathaniel's residence, there was scarcely any conversation ; for that gentleman himself was revolving great thoughts on the subject of venison, and when he ceased from that theme, he became perplexed about the means of explaining his appearance as convoy to Mr. Charles, so as not to compromise the youth in the opinion of the ladies. He was a rapid schemer, and his mind was made up in plenty of time to expound the state of the case to his wife and daughter as soon as he entered their presence with his prize.

"I've brought him, you see, dears ; poor fellow, he was so beset with 'a pressure of engagements,' that he couldn't have come if I hadn't been good-natured enough to go and help him out of the throng, and set a few little matters to rights. Nothing like system, is there, Charles, for getting through 'pressures' ? But system isn't learned in a day. Never mind, I'll soon teach you mine ; and so, ladies, as I've probably lost a good many fees by this unremunerating business, I'll have a kiss a-piece for my pains, and two more from Sarah, and then to dinner with what appetite Heaven may send."

Feminine obedience is the bulwark of social and domestic order, as well as the mainspring of masculine happiness ; otherwise we should be disposed to deal very leniently with the decided repugnance of Miss Boothby to this business-like settlement of unquestioned claims ; as it was, however, she preferred to pass her good word for 3s. 4d., as her half of the fee ; and we are by no means surprised that she should have chosen this course, for, most assuredly, had she literally obeyed her hirsute step-father, she would have been uncomfortably red in the face all the evening.

The dinner was different—if anything, even better. The conversation was different, perhaps a little duller and more constrained ; but the state of Mr. Charles's mind very speedily recovered the peculiar and very genial tone of the first meeting of *these friends*. And before the grim hour of ten—

which the "first notions" of moral science forbade the methodical lawyer from transgressing—we may venture to say that Mr. Charles was in the enviable mood of a favoured swain who has had rather a longer tiff with his Audrey than was pleasant, and had just made it up ; although in his case, both the favouritism and the tiff, as well as the reconciliation, were the creatures of his own imagination.

Our acquaintance with heroines is, as yet, recent and contracted ; and on that ground, we have not the hardihood, for this turn, to follow Miss Boothby to her boudoir (we believe that is the correct thing), nor yet to her pillow, bathed, doubtless, with no end of tears, and puffed up (aërated, we might say) with no end of sighs ; but considering that one day, not so very long after, she became Mrs. Charles Barton, we have little doubt that the usual melancholy prologoumena were properly gone through. Then again, it is incumbent on the chronicler who seeks the public credit for his narrative, to be scrupulously minute in the description of personal appearance ; so much is this minuteness insisted on, that if he should divide the face into five hundred distinct parts, and transfer each part to his page with as much life and expression and beauty as belonged to the entire countenance, the exaggeration would be welcomed with rapture, as "so true to nature," "one feels as if one knew her," and so forth.

But as to Sarah, though she sometimes did divide or multiply her little face into somewhere about five hundred parts, by looking into one of those funny, round, many-angled mirrors at which our grandsires wondered, we feel indisposed to repeat the process here. One face was enough in all conscience—especially when it was so beneficent and meek, and so loving and intelligent—a slight and graceful shade for the lamps of love and piety and plain sense within. Then, if we were disposed to chop up that slender figure into five hundred parts, no doubt we should detect many fragments of the line of beauty, and gentle swell, and elegant limbs ; but we should despair of putting the pieces together again, so as to reproduce our Sarah, as God made her, and as *we used to love her*. And now we mention the word love, it occurs to us that we cannot better convey our own impressions

f the appearance of this heroine, than by the assertion of a solemn conviction, that no one ever saw her without wishing she might love her ; and no one ever dared to love her, without a passionate effort to win her, if he was a man ; or an equally passionate leaning to suicide, if he was a simpleton. She might be described (and, indeed, often was so described, even by men of undoubted repute for orthodoxy) as one who had either kept her first estate, or had very early in life turned her back from her fallen condition, and was always getting nearer and nearer to the gates from which her first parents had once been driven forth. In her heart of hearts she had made not so much a shrine as a home for the grand remedial faith once delivered to the saints ; and that perennial spring spread over her whole being, physical and spiritual, a culture, a grace, and a loveliness far more entrancing and overpowering, even to the sensualist, than all the voluptuous enticements of more material and sensuous beauty. To sum up this transcendental description, she was extremely neat in her dress and her manners, light complexioned—full of native grace in her general address, overflowing with tenderness, when once love had broken the thin ice of restraint, and, finally, as already intimated, about one-tenth of her mother in bulk. That was our Sarah. It would be wrong, no doubt, to date the mutual passion of those young hearts to the second day more than to the first meeting at Nathaniel's dinner table ; but it was somewhere between the two, or in the neighbourhood of both evenings, that their course of love took its rise. "They never told their love" in detail, except to each other, and now the interesting secret has gone with Sarah to the grave ! and it remains for us to collect, with reverent affection, the traces of its unhindered growth.

One of the most important, as well as one of the earliest traces we have been able to discover, was the alteration in Mr. Charles's temper of mind and habits of life. To the no small astonishment of Mr. Mottram, that gentleman's monotonous leisure was almost unbroken, except by the frequent and self-indulgent diversions to which his nature was given. His respect for his master sensibly increased, till it became almost painful to him when his master unbent him-

self, and talked familiarly with his man. He could not account for the change ; for, though one so near the person of a lover could not well be ignorant that there was love in the case, yet his own experiences in that line furnished him with no clue to the mystery which surrounded his master—so unsatisfactory, so uninfluential, had they been ; or, if there had been any result from his amorous fancies, it had been of such a diametrically opposite kind, that he was ever so many weeks before he announced to the irreligious cook, that “it was Drake’s prim little girl that was at the bottom of all this confounded Methodism.” He stoutly vaunted almost every night in the kitchen, that the benighted individual upstairs should have warning on the morrow ; but the morrow always suggested the prudent reflection, that the more his master reformed, the more room would there be, and at the same time the less occasion, for the exercise of his manœuvring talents in regard to the hamper which had been removed from its undignified solitude in the little back room to a goodly fellowship of kindred spirits in the cellar next door to the kitchen.

The amount of reformation which Love accomplished in Mr. Charles was considerable in the gross, though, from its transiency, we should suspect a large admixture of what school arithmetics call “Tare and Tret.” The mornings were about equally divided between Selden and Sarah ; the one he read ostensibly—to the other he wrote absurdly ; or else, on very fine days (and he contrived to find a great many more of the kind than most Londoners fall in with), he would urge the considerations of health on her side, and relaxation from arduous reading on his side, as irresistible arguments for boating excursions on the river. The boating in itself was not exactly a passion with him ; but he had taken an oar now and then in his Oxford days—more generally, however, he had betaken himself to punting on his own account ; and, to do him justice, he was sufficiently modest to take with him at all times a pimply-faced waterman, whose redeeming merit was deafness, but whose presence and well-known character gave the best possible guarantee against drowning. Then the

gs (Sundays to boot) were one undeviating round of courting—whatever that may signify.

ay be asked what the Buccaneer said to all this. We—nothing, vocally—not a word (as became a father), was applied to for permission to do the very thing they had been doing for weeks ; and then he growled his bush—He supposed it wasn't Christian-like to vo wives, and not canonical to marry a step-daughter ; e—but he supposed it couldn't be helped ; and he to talk about settlements, (the unfeeling monster of a ng !) and was constantly wanting to know which of o made the first offer, and when they had fixed for the g. But Mrs. Drake was swallowed up (large as she y her pride and pleasure. She did no mean share of iring herself ; despised the very memory of the de-Mr. Boothby's spiritless addresses ; and sometimes o far as to wish it was proper to wish she was a widow

Barton obeyed with alacrity a summons to London the worthy Mr. Drake had dispatched very speedily ie formal communication of Charles. Not that there e slightest doubt in the stepfather's mind as to the leness of the match to both parties, but especially, he rsuaded, to the Bartons, father and son. The mere t of losing his pleasant companion and favourite did npt him to depreciate her excellent qualities, with r of either consoling himself, or misleading his young ; on the contrary, when he set himself to study all her in the new light gathering round her, his esteem in- l tenfold, and his fatherly love went hand-in-hand with eem. His motive in sending for Mr. Barton was to be in these feelings ; for he felt assured that the mere on of such a lovable being into a family so wasted as t Arlton, would bring a joy great enough to fill every He was generous by nature, but the few years he had rith his kindly wife and her kindlier daughter, had pened his heart still wider ; and now, when he thought life-long sorrow of his friend, he rejoiced that he had child to give to his home.

No time was lost on the father's part ; but to say that he hastened on the wings of irrepressible gladness, would be untrue ; his own love had been so tender—so sorely hurt—so smitten with untimely blight—that he could not but be solicitous, even to pain, when he learned that his only son had given his inexperienced heart into another's keeping. His knowledge of Sarah was of long standing indeed, but he had never weighed her in the balance with the happiness and the very life of his child. He had yet to look her through and through—to criticise, to know her, in short, as he would know the wife of his son. If anxiety predominated during the journey, and grew fast as the hour approached in which so many fears were to be dispersed or confirmed—no sooner had he embraced his Charles, and listened to the artless, animated tale of love, than he felt sensible relief. His boy was himself again. The old springs of affection, which not long ago threatened to dry up, were playing away in the buoyant heart ; and the health both of mind and of body, so lately sinking in languor, was fresh and sweet as the morning air. How could he hold back his confidence and blessing from the gentle maiden who had worked this enchantment on his son ? Before he saw her, and while yet returning her filial greeting, anxiety passed away, and he blessed his son's betrothed. He remembered the blank dismay of his own early days, when he looked into the heart of his wife, and found there no image, no thought, no love of God ; but now he could hardly bear to look upon that fervent piety which made his own appear to him stale, pitiful, almost dead. He could not quite solve the mystery of so much love for Charles, and so much love to God ; but he doubted neither fact. He understood that the one love not only hallowed but intensified the other ; yet he could not distinctly recall any hour in his own life, unless when calamity had bruised him, in which human and Divine love had blended so thoroughly together.

Did he ever change his point of view ? Did he stand side by side with that heavenly pilgrim, and, looking with her *and for her* at the companion of her upward journey, wonder *whether she* would be strong enough to draw him with her to

skies, or tremble lest he should hinder, pervert, and finally destroy the purpose and the aim of that young life? Oh! it fell not to his share of duty to think and pray for her, except that she might save and bless his child! But if he lived her to his heart as the very fountain of peace to self and of healing to his son, was it not unkind that he should forget how terrible the risk her love would lead her incur? Yes, it was selfish: not to be blamed of us, indeed; for if our thoughts are ever tremulous with a palsying glow, such as had fallen on him, we shall be selfish too. Now at the gates of mercy, and at the throne of Grace, we have present only our own immediate and all-absorbing thoughts in sacrifice to God; still, as he clasped her in his arms, his lips should have framed a double prayer to speak his new-found, redoubled love:—"Lord, may she save her son by Thy good help! Lord, save Thou her soul, though my boy should perish!"

Mr. Barton did not enter into practical sympathy with part of the momentous question of religion, it is hardly matter of surprise that no very pointed display of zeal on his head was made by either Mrs. or Mr. Drake. Nathaniel made no professions, though it was understood he put in practice the major part of Christianity. That he was neither enthusiastic in religion, nor even moderately impressed with its vast relative importance, might be concluded from his casual and sole comments:—"Still waters run deep;" "one thing at a time, and plenty too;" "A place for everything" (he meant church), "and everything in its place" (he put himself on Sunday mornings); so that, while he never belittled the fervour of Sarah's piety by ridicule, he was not truly the kind of person to feel moved by any fears for her heroic character, on the ground of her contemplated union with an irreligious man. In very truth, she was so schooled in heavenly lore, and so armed with spiritual weapons, that she could have gained no new cautiousness from her father's counsels, if he had volunteered any; and she needed not, though she would not have spurned, the sympathy or the aid of man.

Her mother was of that pliable sort that fits into any

mould, if it only stays long enough. She was not in the habit of telling it, because there was not the slightest occasion—as everybody knew it nearly as well as herself—but it was a very painful fact, that the late Mr. Boothby had been an abundantly zealous and an abundantly dishonest Methodist of some sort or other, she did not know accurately which, and though her daughter was a living temple of the true God, whose fires had been lighted by these same Methodists, she could never quite overcome the disagreeable associations of Mr. Boothby deceased, and his peculiar religious beliefs ; so that on her marriage with Mr. Drake, it might be truly said, she had no doctrinal prejudices to overcome—her religious sensibilities were a little awry, but they were stamped with no discernible pattern, and Nathaniel, as we have seen, kept no particular die at hand for impressing religious truths on human hearts. It is not to be supposed that Sarah, conscientiously and earnestly religious as she was, neglected to use her influence in the hour of love's sweet prime for the noblest and holiest ends. She could not gainsay the pleadings of her own heart in behalf of Charles—his motherless and almost solitary youth—his excusable ambition in college contests—his wrecking disappointments—his unsettled London life—his present mad delight in her all-sufficing love—his burning visions of earthly happiness, so near to their fulfilment, or rather, their commencement—but she knew a secret, “the secret of the Lord,” and her true maidenly heart would not, could not keep that secret from him ; she had a well of living waters, and could she hesitate to draw and give him to drink, who but yesterday had been so weary in the desert, and now thirsted for bliss ? Her soul was rejoicing in the hope which took in all the glory of God ; could she leave him to his beggarly heritage of earthly good ; she, so infinitely rich, and her loved one so poor ? Besides, she remembered that though she had given her allegiance, and her love, and her life to Charles, the gift had been forestalled—her all, for ever, had been bought ; it was not hers to offer—but she had offered it to him whose own it was already, and “the Crucified” had accepted the proffered gift—had led her, as she thought, to ask it at his hands again, a loan, a solemn trust, to bless

another human heart with the usury of that great treasure which belonged of right to God. Was she not sworn a faithful minister of Heaven? How could she account for that precious stewardship, the Heaven-lent life, if she used it not to gain a husband's soul for God?

In her guilelessness and unsuspecting simplicity, she imagined that her first efforts were successful—her first betrothal sacrifice accepted, and the prayer of her passionate earthly love sealed and answered from on high. But if she was mistaken, it was not the result of hypocrisy and wilful deception; for Charles, who almost worshipped her step-father, because she clung to him so fondly, could not fail to bless and to love the religion which she counted so precious, and which added so greatly to her happiness and her worth. It is an old, but, at the same time, a very note-worthy testimony to the paramount value and power of religion, that it is so often called to aid mortal love in its vain efforts after self-utterance. It becomes indispensable as the vehicle of that vehement love which breaks all the bounds of ordinary action, and defies ordinary speech—the love which dreams that it can never die—must rise, and thrive, and bloom evermore. But we need hardly insist on the danger of supposing this *use* of religion, however spontaneous and fervent, to be the adoption of Christianity which God has demanded from mankind. We would not have the pencillings of a heavenly tint erased from the sweet pictures of earthly love, for they may remain when other hues begin to fade; we do not urge suspicion on either in reference to the other's genuine piety—only that each heart prove itself, and save itself from finding, when too late, that it has nursed a strong delusion and a lie! The elegant and touching reference in Charles's letters and conversation to the brevity of life—the glories of eternity—the love of the Father—the wonders of Redemption, were but stolen garlands flung on the pathway of his beloved; they were not his own—he had never made them such—he had never paid their price of tears and self-denial, and a lowly suppliant faith. They had the semblance of that reality which they were intended to reciprocate, enough of beauty to deceive even one who was familiar with the

fruit unto holiness, and can we blame her, as she counted on the end being everlasting life ? But even from this case, if there were no corroboration from a thousand others, we might safely say, that at no period of life is it so important to be vigilant against the tempter, who seizes upon the hours of delirium that he may substitute fancy and sentiment for solid and rational faith—the burnished brass, instead of the fine gold of the sanctuary. She could not doubt his love for her. Oh, no ! That was beyond all fear ; but, mixed up with this, and always in bright harmony, was the ardent seeming of a heavenly mind—could she doubt this ? It bore the same warranty—it was regular, constant, passionate. If she doubted here, how could she trust his human love ? Both came like blended strains upon one soft summer's breeze—her ear and her soul could make no distinction ; if one was delusive, the whole would prove a dream.

BOOK IV.
THE SECRET,—A BLESSING.

King.— “To persevere
In obstinate condolment, is a course
Of impious stubbornness: 'tis unmanly grief;
It shows a will most incorrect to Heaven,—
A heart unfortified, or mind impatient;
An understanding simple and unschooled.”

HAMLET.

“Here's that which is too weak to be a sinner—
Honest water, which ne'er left man i' the mire.”

TIMON OF ATHENS.

“A most incomparable man, breathed, as it were,
To an untirable and continue goodness.”

TIMON OF ATHENS.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

2. The second part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

Book Fourth.

THE SECRET,—A BLESSING.

RE-AWAKENING LIFE.

3 important preliminary arrangements were completed without loss of time, and as the matter of settlements was almost entirely in Mr. Nathaniel's hands, there can be no doubt that he contrived to secure no unworthy set-off against the couple of thousands which he generously gave as a dowry to his adopted daughter. Mr. Barton was still a healthy man, and by his quiet mode of living at Arlton he was enabled to make some way towards repairing the serious state of fortune which had marked the close of his earlier happier years. To him it was only an addition to the use of money when he divided his substance with his children. All his thoughts were pre-occupied with the question—How can I promote and make sure the happiness of all I care for on earth? And even if he had been less anxious for Charles, there would have been an equal indifference on the subject of property. From the first it had been rather a burden than a blessing, and he often gravely acknowledged his own unfitness for the management of pecuniary affairs. Besides, he had recently entered upon a new phase of life. His opinions had received a lively development in a new direction. Always remembering in his prayers and charitable deeds the poor of this world, he had kept alive more than average vigour the impulses of a generous nature; *but until within a few years he had been content*

with the open-handed distribution of his wealth, and the more formal counsels of clerical authority and wisdom. Later on, however, he had begun to institute solemn questionings into the past, that he might make up in the solitude which God had granted him, his last account. He was terrified to find his life had been for the most part but a moody dream; that the vows which he had taken in his youth had not only been broken and relinquished, but they had never been fulfilled as their solemnity demanded. They had been scrupulously observed, and punctiliously renewed year after year, and even day after day; but his devotion had been more the preference of taste, or the indulgence of the better part of his desires, than the zeal of a prophet whose message to the world was of stupendous moment. Mingling with his saddening reflections, and gradually forming them into a godly sorrow and a substantial penitence, were the awful shadows of that bright life which he had not long before given back to the great Judge, so maimed and wounded, that he trembled, could not fail to tremble, lest his own faulty tenderness and insane forbearance would at least be blamed because it left the wide wound alone to bleed the soul's sweet life away. Why had God bereft him? He had been greatly trusted—had he been unfaithful? Why had God not stranded him in utter poverty, or smitten the noble mind within, or hidden him in the grave. Why had he been cast, a lonely man, with wealth, with leisure, and with surviving piety, on the edge of that scene of misery and fruitless toil and all-consuming vice? He had been made to feel how infinite might be the grief which folly and weakness and trifling with temptations could inflict even in the present world, and as he gazed upon the external wretchedness around him, that experience prevented him from the erroneous fancy that there must be some special recompensing pleasure beneath the hideous spectacle of wantonness and self-debasement. He knew that there were some sins that could eat their way moth-like through the rich man's purple—burn through the mail of steel, and corrode the purest and most loving hearts. And could the woe be less poignant, when *there was nought to soothe beside it—when rags, and filth, and pestilence proclaimed it—when madness and the death*

gripe shrieked in dreadful chorus—"Drink is Death?" His torn heart wearied to be away from misery he could so well understand, and thought so incurable. But had he ever tried to arrest this spreading deadly plague? Had he ever, in his rage of sorrow for the past, risen up to curse the demon from his house, and proclaim that curse to men? No, he had sported with the satyr—and still he pressed the ruddy wine-cup to his lip—but he was safe. His inclinations, even, were not towards indulgence of a sensual kind. Still more safe was he, because of his principle and faith. But was he safe? He leaned upon a rock—but there had been times when that very rock had shaken to its foundations, as if his trials had proved too heavy to endure. Might there not even yet come a deluge of sorrow that should sweep his principles and faith away? Oh, if God should slay his last one, lay him dead and lost before his feet? How would he stand in that evil day? Where would be that patient, lowly, trusty faith? Would it not die within him? And if so, all was gone—the rod of his stay would be broken, and the tempter might work his will.

But if he himself were safe, the more urgent question still remained, what of Charles? "Oh, how I love the dear boy," he said, and often said—"I would strip myself of all to make him great and happy. His life shall not, cannot, be the tame seclusion mine has been. His proud spirit shall have room—yes, and power—sway, triumph. He is worthy of them all. He shall be his country's shield and glory, and his name shall live on men's tongues and thankful hearts for ever. Yes, I will give him all; and in the noontide of his prosperous life he shall turn aside to bless me, to guide my faltering steps, that I may see his greatness and his goodness too. It is not my timid and retiring spirit that quickens that proud step and flashes from that restless eye. Alice, he is thine own, thine wholly. Ah—but have I forgotten—when can I—how can I even in heaven forget—that mother—that only boy? Has she enriched him with her great gifts and her impassioned nature? He drew her life away when he was born—her mind's life went out when he was born. Yes, she gave him *all—all she had*—as I would now; but was the gift en-

venomed? Was that fire smouldering—is it now? May it not break forth to devour the rich inheritance of mental power, and parch, and blight, and ruin all besides? What drove her to maddening draughts? I trust—I know it was disease. Will he then pine, and thirst, and rage, and droop, and die like her? Must that fell grate fall once again between two pledged hearts, and I who wondered at his baby-love, and drank in all comfort from his smile—must I—can I bear to hear that voice rave and see that smile fade, and in its stead the maniac grin, the madman's howling laughter? Mercy, Lord—I cry! oh pity, Lord, I weep unto thee! God in heaven forbid! One is far, far too much, and yet I dream that in the day of reckoning I may plead with Alice—my great love—my unwarned love—but, oh, if I meet them, standing apart in the embracings of a kindred sorrow? Will not Alice bid me away, in terror for her child—the child she left me—will she not upbraid me that my love was selfish, feeble, worthless—and curse me through those dreadful hours, that I had not learned the lesson of her fall in time to save the boy? Oh, no! That twofold curse would sink me into hell. I will not hear my Charles saying in the last words I ever hear him speak—‘Father, you knew my peril, and yet you would not try to save me. You bade me drink—I drank—I died—I perished.’ He shall not say it; I will appeal to the great Judge with clean hands. He must not, *must not* perish, but if—oh, *if* he should? Great God, I will be free of blood—my own child's blood.”

After such mournful but salutary musings, Mr. Barton felt the strength of a fixed purpose, and was at peace. But he was tossed to and fro in a little while in search of a fixed plan. It seemed to him at first that all his efforts should be directed to the solemn admonition and the affectionate entreaty—that he should brace himself to the melancholy recital of a mother's sin and madness that he might save a son from death. But soberer reflection led him to apprehend that a full revelation of the dreadful secret might hurry on the very fate he wished to ward off from Charles. It seemed a wise *part to wait, and watch, and pray*; and thus be like the tried *soldier who listens in his sleep, prepared to detect the stealthy foot-fall, and to repel the intrusion of the foe.*

And he thought—"How many of my neighbours may at this very hour be borne down to more than death, because on their hearth has fallen the shadows of that doom which I only fear for Charles? And these the ignorant—the very poor—the honest or the guilty—how shall they be comforted? Who will urge the claims of wisdom and of Highest love? Who will pour oil into their wounds? Who can point out the narrow way of escape? Who can save their other children? Who will stretch forth a hand to save themselves? I never tried in vain at Oxford; and many a happy household, many a prosperous and honoured father is blessing me at this hour, that I dared to save him when a youth. I will go forth and scatter blessings—that in my old age, in all times of sorrow that yet may come, in the judgment, and in heaven, I may reap the blessings of the poor, and bear my sheaves to God."—But yet he hovered in uncertainty; the purpose was immovable, but the means unsettled. He would forth and try; so gather wisdom.

Some years before, not very far from his own house, stood the well-known cottage and the nursery ground of Archie Simpson. Archie was a skilful planter, and had good employment and increasing markets for his young trees and shrubs—for Arlton was a growing town, growing not only long insipid rows of cottage houses as like as like could be, but here and there and round about, houses of a gayer and more various fashion—some of large pretensions, but all wanting Archie's shrubs. The nurseryman, though Scotch, was thriftless; or, at least, he showed few signs, either in himself or house, of his increasing trade. The truth is, as Archie often, very often explained, gardening was damp work, even in summer, and then it was droughty besides; and to his rather contracted mind, there was only one remedy for this double evil. Beer would do very well for the drought, or even water may-be; but it was no good for the damp. Then thick boots might do to keep out the damp, but they only made the drought worse. So there seemed to be no choice left. It was rheumatism or whisky. Nobody found any fault with him on the score of expense, for was he not getting on famously? And he found very little fault with himself, for he'd a right to do what he liked *with his own*, and he wasn't going to be ached and

pained into an old man before his time, not he. So it would seem, according to his own view of the case, that though his business was flourishing vastly beyond all former experience, the expenses of working it ate up all the profits before they came in. Mrs. Simpson was a simple body, who seldom gave herself license or time to look into her husband's affairs, or his peccadilloes either. She had enough to do, she said, without looking after a drunken fool like that every hour of the day and night. What that "enough to do" might mean is a myth altogether; it wants satisfactory explanation to this day. For, to the best of our remembrance (we were young, then, it is true), she had only one child at a time, and only one of them all lived above a month or two; and it is an ascertained fact that she'd very little washing to do; neither she nor her husband ever being fit to be seen, and the baby for the time as much inured to dirt as the father's shrubs. It is true she kept a shop; but it was such a little shop, and such a nasty shop, and had so little in it, and was so out of the way, that its only customers, or nearly so, we can vouch, were groups of boys, one or more of whom might perchance have a halfpenny to spend, all the rest hanging on in a greedy parasitical way to go shares, and all, with wonderful unanimity, bent on profiting by the excusing halfpenny to lay in a goodly supply of nice straight sticks, or thick strong rough lengths, with a curve at the root end.

Now, whether it was that Archie had on one Saturday night rather overdone the anti-rheumatic remedy, and so driven the rheum to his brain, or whether he had rashly, as he said, paid more wages to his men than he had any need to have done, we do not know; but, as true as fate, he had no meat in his basket, in fact, nothing but tobacco and an old friend of a bottle, that could almost have found its own way by this time to the Nag's Head in the market-place; and, as it was very late, and the shops all shut, there seemed no chance of getting anything in time for Sunday's dinner. In this emergency Mr. and Mrs. Simpson did as people often do when the cupboard hasn't a bone in it; they fell a-dreaming of forbidden luxuries, until a burning indignation against landlords and law-makers warmed both breasts, and practical

defiance of the one and the other led Mrs. Simpson to propose, and Mr. Simpson to devise, snares for the capture of rabbits, hares, pheasants, partridges, or any other stray "privileges of nobility," as they were then and might even yet be called. It was not seemly that their pot should be empty on the Sabbath, while the vermin that gnawed their young trees into premature decay, might very readily be put in pound in that same pot.

Such, we make no doubt, would have been the reasonings of the worthy couple, if any reasoning had been called for in the circumstances ; but whether they cherished any enlarged views on the game-laws, or had no knowledge of their practical working beyond the fact of the injuries they had long sustained, it is but too true that Mr. Simpson proceeded with a caution and resolution—and returned with a hare and a rabbit—worthy of one who had been at that business often before. It was, to say no more, an unlucky circumstance for him that he was by no means the only individual in Arlton who cherished revolutionary notions on the subject of game. So far from this was the actual case, that for many weeks past an unusual measure of liveliness had been observable in more than one public-house where popular goose-clubs were supposed to shelter still more popular but sacredly guarded mysteries in reference to pigeons, birds, and pheasants. Vigorous measures had been thus forced on the reluctant neighbouring squires. They felt in a special manner, that they were the responsible guardians of public morals, and the upholders of the glorious Constitution, though there might be a slight variance just about election time as to what the Constitution meant. To them—"in solemn conclave met"—it seemed good to lay down with new pomp the good old English maxim that game was given for sport ; that it was poison to the morals of the poor so much as to think about it, rendering them (and they spoke very feelingly on this point) discontented with their lot in life, which lot forbade all sport as sin, and with their daily bread, and daily beer, and weekly dish of pork ; that it was essential for the good government of the turbulent masses that rich men should reside on their estates some fourth part of the year. And how could they ? Was it in human nature

to leave London so long without a special inducement? And what inducement in the country, they wondered, but stubble fields, and well-trained dogs, and plenty of game? Even the manufacturing men, who were slowly pushing their way amongst the ranks of the gentry, by buying ground from under the very feet of those who had for ages looked upon themselves as England's natural lords and owners—even these “new men,” as old Rome would have called them, shook of their plebeian sympathies, and recognized, as if by instinct, the intimate dependence of the very throne and church of England on the preservation of game and the prosecution of marauders “with the utmost vigour of the law.”

Luckless Archie; he had never been suspected! Who, indeed, could have thought that he would run counter to the highest interests of those who mostly patronized but seldom paid him! Low as was the estimation in which the squirearchy held the grades beneath them, they never could have looked for ingratitude so base. But though Archie's personal share in these dark conspiracies was never even dreamed of, his extensive shrubberies were the roosting-places most affected by the neighbouring pheasants, and his young trees gave kindly nourishment to rabbits of a tender age when there was nothing better to be had, and the fear was no discredit to the keeper that other night birds, besides pheasants, roosted thereabouts, and other depredators than the poor harmless hare, braised and scraped and broke the densely crowded cane-like plantations. The force of these considerations had on that ill-fated night brought within ear-shot, and gun-shot, if they'd been in the mind, some half-a-dozen “stout, active, and courageous men.—N.B. Those who knew the Arlton poachers best, preferred.” These men knew all about it. They were all converted poachers, up to every dodge. They knew better than to shoot first; they were content with silent watching, and noiseless following, and thus the cosy plan—all in his own grounds, too—came to a grievous end.

The lordlings of the county thronged the bench at the next assizes, as if poor Archie had poisoned his wife, or shot a real lord, or plotted his country's downfall; indeed he had done much worse. It was not the common crime of poaching—it

was the unpardonable sin of doing it on his own grounds, or very near his own. There was incalculable danger here—what would be the end of it? He must be made an example of; and they looked as if it would be too merciful to hang him. They wished they had thought of it in time; there should have been a new clause in the statutes of treason, to meet a case so outrageous, and so ruinous to the country; but as it was, the law happily was still in force by which they could transport him for seven years. This law was put in force, and the prosperous seedsman was seen no more in those parts for many a day. He had, a little time before the period of our story, roamed back to his old quarters. His crime was expiated, but it was not of a kind to be forgiven. To the poor he was more than a martyr, he was a kind of saint. They had rejoiced unfeignedly, to find that he had made common cause with them, and now they welcomed him with all the honour of an Arlton triumph. But the poor had no gardens, and Archie could not weave; and the rich, and even those who would be thought getting rich, would have naught to say to one who had long years ago dared to steal his own game.

His loving wife had been the first and only party to feel the glow of popularity. For, in her destitution, peniless and husbandless, and almost babeless, she had thrown herself upon a kind, discerning public, and the public had responded with a patent mangle. This was, in her judgment, worth a brace of husbands such as Archie, for it did nothing but make money, and could not go out when it liked spending as much as it earned, like Archie. She, consequently, offered but a cool welcome to the returning exile; and while she tried to speculate on what would become of her now, she most deliberately wished they'd given him a life instead of only seven years. Nor was it unnatural that this unwomanly wish should acquire strength night by night, when she stretched her wearied limbs to rest with the unpleasant thought that she had been grinding at that mangle all day, only to make Archie drunk all night.

Mr. Barton well remembered the excitement of both town and country seven years before; but he had taken no part,

except to beg very timidly of some magisterial neighbour that the poor man should not be hardly dealt with, which intercession had cost him the esteem and confidence which he had never sought, but which his independent fortune and good blood had necessarily won for him. He had heard of the criminal's return to his home, or rather to his old haunts. He had also learned with deep regret, that the once promising gardener was now a castaway—a sot—a cruel husband, and (this touched him more nearly) a heartless father, and he resolved to seek him out, and save him if he could. The idea was a good one—he would begin his work of love thus low down—and if he could but win a being so wretched back to peace and plenty, he might hope to achieve no end of good. He would go and try; feel his way at first, and not be disheartened with the first repulse. He found the dissipated game-law saint in a very unsaintly mood, and the saint's wife he also caught in the fact of anticipating his own benevolent design of endeavouring to turn her husband from the error of his ways. So earnest were the expostulations of this female missionary of temperance, that he might well doubt his own aptitude for the task if she should fail, and so shrill and ceaseless had her eloquence become, that he was daunted at the very door, and might have knocked and kicked for half an hour if he had still been minded to intrude. One plunge and the worst was over. The creaking door gave way; the shrieking woman gave way too; for she remembered that Mr. Barton had given her a guinea towards the now prostituted mangle, and she knew by that same token he was none of Archie's lot, and so she gave him silent welcome. Archie was of Scotch extraction, but his speech was now a compound of indifferent Arlton, and worse Botany Bay. It was a lingo unique of its kind, for though many Arltonians had been transported, he was the only one that had ever come back; so that, without formal permission from our readers, we spare them the trouble of translation, by leaving out the oaths and slang, together with the Arlton and the Scotch peculiarities.

"Well, Mr. Simpson, you see I have come to pay you a visit; it's a long time since we met, and we're old neighbours, you know, and I thought perhaps you would not come
me."

"Why not? what made you think that, eh?" replied the individual addressed, with temper, "why not? I'm as good as you any day of the week, and better on Sundays. I never did you any harm."

"No, my friend, you never did; and I never thought you did any one harm but yourself. I don't believe in game laws any more than you do."

"You belong to them as does, though;—you're all of a sort, some better, some worse; all as bad as needs be."

"No; there you're wrong, my man. It's quite true that I have land—less than I used to have—but still a good deal—but I'm a clergyman, Archie, not a squire."

"All the worse, I say; wasn't it old Chossulton, the bog-trotting, fox-hunting, guzzling brute, that committed me to the Assize; and he looked as if he'd have hung his own father, only let 'em 'a' caught him snaring. A parson! God rid us of all parsons!"

"Well, but you see, Archie, old Chossulton, as you call him, did the very best that he could for you. I know he did, though he does stick up for the game laws."

"How do you mean did his best?"

"Just this way: he gave you the only chance of getting scot-free, by sending you to the jury, for they're mostly farmers; and though they wouldn't like to own it, old Chossulton knows as well as they do, that a jury of farmers is now-a-days almost certain to say, Not guilty; whatever it may be in a poaching case. It's the only way they've got of showing their mind on the matter."

"Why didn't they bring it in not guilty, then, I want to know?"

"They daren't for once, as it happened; because all the gentry, for miles round, were there, and the very look of them was enough to scare men whom they could ruin with a stroke of the pen; it was unfortunate for you, the grand folks had so set their hearts on a conviction; it could not be helped, but the Rector did the best he could, that is, as far as his knowledge went.—You must not be hard on parsons, Archie; they're not quite so black as you think."

"I don't mind leaving you out.—You're somewhere about

the best of the lot, I hear tell ; but to my mind that's because you've given it up."

"I gave it up, my friend, in heavy grief—perhaps I was wrong, but we are all wrong at times, and we must help each other to get right."

"All moonshine ; who helps me, I want to know ?"

"You help yourself, you greedy villain, you," bawled Mrs. Deborah from the corner of the mangle.

"I will help you," said Mr. Barton.

"Ah, with fine words."

"Hold your tongue, you brute, the gentleman gave me a guinea for the mangle ; and that's more than ever you gave me. I wouldn't mind him, sir, if I was you, he's been drinking all night," said the honourably minded wife.

"Yes, I will help you with fine words, if I can, and if you'll take them, I'll give you something to wash them down."

"Come, that's more like. I'll tell you what, you may talk about death and heaven till this time to-morrow if you'll lend me a five shilling piece, and we'll talk matters comfortably over a bottle of whisky.—I'm no fool in Scripture, though I don't go to church. My mother was a whacker at texts, and my father, though he did rather a little in my line, was a godly Presbyterian body ; and if I have forgotten my catechism, 't isn't for want of whipping. What do you say to it, sir—is it a bargain ?"

"No ; very far from it, my good man. I don't particularly want to preach about your catechism, which I make no doubt is good enough in its way."

"A mighty sight bet'er than your old *M.* and *N.* jargon."

"Well, then, your *excellent* catechism—will that do ? But I want" (drawing nearer to him) "to talk to you as a neighbour and a friend about—"

"Oh, hang it ! I'm off—here, you Dev.—Deb.—I mean, give us that sixpence, or you know what."

And it seemed for a moment anything but probable that Mr. Barton's mission would end favourably on that day ; but he laid his hands on the offended gardener, and said right out for a wonder,

" Archie, I've a job for you—a good one—a long one—as long as you like—and it will be the making of you over again to come and do it. Come to-day, or I shall give it to another."

" There is some sense in that now—but what makes you go for to knock a man all of a heap just to pick him up again ? "

" I did not go for to do it ; but I wanted to say that if I give you good wages and a twelvemonth's work certain—it must be on the condition that you will drink nothing but water all that time."

" There you go again—knocking down as fast as you pick up ; why should I drink only water any more than you ; so as I do your work well, what's that to you ? I mean no disrespect, I'm sure, but I'll be hanged if I can see why you should sit at your parlour window drinking wine and brandy-and-water, with a good dry room to your back, and me shivering myself to death, on cold water. I say it's rich folks that should live on bread and water, and leave the spirits and wine to us as needs it, and if I'm not a long way out of my recollection, your own Bible says—wine isn't for the rich, and kings and such like, but for the poor ; who's poorer than me, who needs it more than me ? If you practise what you used to preach, you'd do as the Bible says, and give me the wine and keep the cold water for yourself and betters. It's all very fine, and I'll say it, though you do take back your offer, and I thank you all the same. It's all very grand, no doubt, a gentleman like you as is going home this day and every day to a bellyful of all sorts of tit-bits, and another bellyful of all sorts of nice wines and good liquors—it's uncommonly fine, I say, for you to come and knock the poor man's little sup straight out of his hands, and I won't, though I starve for it. I'm an Englishman, and I won't be bought and bribed to give up my liberty, and so there you have my mind about it."

" Will you only try it for a little while, and see how much happier you would be without it ? "

" No, I won't—that's the long and short of the matter. Why don't you try it on some of these cold days ? "

" But mark ye, friend, I never drink too much, and you know well enough you often do, and it brings you into trouble

and poverty, and disgrace. Now, what I take does me no harm ; I can afford it easily."

"Afford it, can you ; when there's hundreds of weavers out of work, and starving to death at your door ? Don't tell me."

"I wasn't thinking of that just then ; but I mean that you rob your wife and little boy when you drink, and I don't injure my boy ; I'd give it up to day if I thought it would do him harm."

"And it will do him harm, I tell you, Mr. Barton, and I should know. If my father had spouted less catechism and swallowed less whisky, I shouldn't have been racing full speed to hell as I am. He went to heaven, our minister made sure ; but he didn't go till he'd given his son a pretty good start on the road to the devil, and for all your parsoning it'll be the same with you and Mr. Charles. I haven't forgot his mettle and parts ; and don't you think I'm a fool any more—I've paid high for my learning in that line. When you see him howling down—"

"Oh hush, man—for Heaven's—for mercy's sake—do not be so cruel—I would do you a good turn—why will you turn round and rend the heart that is all kindness to you ?"

"I don't intend it, Mr. Barton—but my blood's up whenever I hear wine-drinking, brandy-sipping, rich folks banning the poor man's dram. Let them leave their decanters, and then come and preach to their hearts' content. I'm sure I'll hold my tongue for one, and let 'em have their say out in quiet."

"I'll tell you what, Archie, you've done me as much good as ever I can do you. I see it all clear now. God brought me here this morning to learn wisdom from a drunkard's lips—let us share the wisdom, and I will give you my word that to the day of my death I will never touch wine or spirits, or anything that could make a man drunk, if you will only give me your hand and say that you will do the same for a year, and you shall have the job I spoke of—it is to make a nursery for me—at the back of my house—for I know that when *Charles* comes of age and gets married, he will like to go back to the old place, and a great deal of the old timber was cut

down when I left. So say the word ; don't look at Deborah—I'll warrant her all right when you are, for I knew her before you did, and I see how you've made her almost forget to love you—but that will all change in an hour ; the old happy time will come again, and the mangle—why, Archie, the mangle will change to a mint, and coin money as soon as it gives over pumping up drink."

" Well, to-morrow—I'm all of a tremble to-day."

" No, now—you'll be worse to morrow ; come along with me—have some coffee and a half a leg of mutton, and with a clear conscience, you'll soon get over the trembling."

And he went out from his sty of a home an unclean brute, to return with the freedom and the strong will that belongs to man. As his shadow crept from the doorway, the poor, cross, ailing wife burst into tears, for she felt that the curse was gone—that he and she were saved at last.

The reformation of the unhappy gardener was wisely and prayerfully commenced by Mr. Barton, and he had very soon the indescribable satisfaction of feeling that he had gained one step in that work to which he desired to dedicate his remaining life. He had discovered, on his very first essay, the wisdom he needed ; and he regarded it as an omen of many a happy success, that he had found that wisdom by means of his own benevolent aims—found it where it was least to be expected. In the dark den of the utterly degraded drunkard, God had met with him, not only to bless his generous efforts in a solitary instance, but to enrich him with the gift of a new truth, and to afford him, in one striking instance, the strongest encouragement to go forth into the world proclaiming and applying that truth. The notorious sot became the diligent and healthful workman, repaying by his fidelity and hardly less by the exhibition of an untiring cheerfulness—all the anxiety and pains of a master who had plucked him as a brand from the burning. Some alteration in Mr. Barton's original plan brought Archie's immediate connexion with his friend to a premature end. But neither the one nor the other entertained a moment's misgiving ; for Archie felt that he was a man again—that all the old stories were but so much *lumber, they did not concern him any more.* He knew that

his skill would not stand idle long in the market now that it was uninjured by the habits of tippling; so that it was with no misgiving that he prepared to relinquish the service of one who had rendered him such lasting benefits. On the other hand, Mr. Barton judged as much from his own feelings as from his observation of the laborious servant. He rejoiced in his new found liberty; for, to a mind like his, it soon became a power—a power to work good for others. He knew that a change had passed over his whole being, for he could look backwards as well as onwards with a sounder, calmer faith in the providence and promises of God; and he felt that his conscience had been purged and made alive, for its dictates rang at all times with a clear, loud, trumpet-tone, and the whole man within him arose to do its bidding. He could not doubt that a similar change had been experienced by his lowly friend, and he was assured that he might trust him even in disappointment and possible want, to resist the enticements which for months had lost their strength. It was not in his or any man's province to apply severe and special tests, or to withhold such helps to constancy as he could render. He did not suffer the newly-found to sink back into that outer misery which, by force of association, might soon have summoned into deadly life its old counterpart of moral weakness and disease.

With judicious kindness he managed to replace Simpson in his old grounds, and he had the enviable pleasure of seeing, in the well-kept gardens, and the still neater house—in the prospering man, the smiling wife, the blooming bouncing boy, that to be the apostle of temperance was indeed to be the friend of home. Other claimants on his notice, and on his purse as well, were soon found in tolerable plenty; but, with one exception, he opened his purse and gave his time, to very little purpose. That exception relates to the parents of the girl who afterwards became Mrs. Jamie Simpson. They had been overtaken by one of the heavier, but still very common casualties of trade, and for months their little mill was silent, and the once lively homestead sad and desolate to look on. Whether the personal energy of the miller might have sufficed *to revive the fallen fortunes of his family or not*, that energy

was not forthcoming. The good man in his plain way had always done his best ; and, when calamitous times set in, he thought he had not could not have a better than the best : so, when he found his old way a failure, he gave himself up to idleness, reckless speeches, wicked thoughts, and most of all to that costliest, because most inefficacious of all anodynes for trouble—drink. Archie remembered him in his comfortable days, and though they were not intimate, it was because the miller frowned upon the gardener's vicious habits, and would have no intercourse at all beyond the meal and money of their weekly trade. So it seemed to the now justly elevated soul of Archie, that he was as good a man as the miller, and needn't be ashamed to show his face in any such like company, if so be, he went on Sunday—(and that, thank God, he said, was the only day he could go),—and so the proud and well-dressed son of temperance made a journey to the mill without furnishing himself with any other passport than his own joyous temper and bran-new clothes. When he deployed himself in full view, a slight twinge of modesty reminded him that he had no business there at all ; but he took comfort in the notion that the miller would be as of old looking after his garden, or, if in the house, most surely looking out of the window ;—further, that the said miller must of necessity have his curiosity tickled to know who it could be with such shiny buttons and jaunty (gentlemanly he meant) air. But as the miller did not exhibit any measure of that imagined weakness, no, not so much as to lift his head when his poor wife, ever wistfully gazing out now, to relieve her sight and head from woe within, exclaimed—

“Who's that, I wonder ? He does not look much like a bum ; but it's Sunday, I forgot, and I reckon bums have best clothes, and play themselves like other folk, when they cannot work. Why, Miller, look here ; if he isn't going to come right in. He swaggers like as if he thought it wasn't Sunday. Bless me, he's knocking at the door !”

“Is he ? by —, I'll teach him to come prowling about my premises !” and the infuriated victim of the law opened the door on the *chain*, and bellowed out such volumes of

blasphemy and reeking spirituous odours, that the modest abstainer outside was glad enough on both accounts to beat a retreat in double quick step.

A report of this misadventure was duly laid before the only man he now deemed wiser than himself; and, after many consultations with his benefactor, he proceeded upon a very happy supposition that his friend was, somehow or other, under an obligation to succour all who were in debt and distress, and an equally happy, but even less tenable idea, that his friend's means were quite adequate to this Quixotism on a large scale, and he flatly proposed that Mr. Barton should pay the miller's debts—lend him money to start again, accepting as security, the promise to abstain as Archie had done, and looking for a return, principal and interest, in the substantial happiness of the reclaimed and reinstated man of flour. For once, Mr. Barton agreed to act out the singular maxims of moral science which his servant had elaborated all out of his own head, and he did just exactly as Archie bade him, to the tune of about £200; and, greatly to the credit of Archie's sagacity, the generous master not only gained the stipulated reward of the miller's thorough rescue from the fangs of the destroyer; but over and above this, a few months saw him £200 richer than, according to Archie's moral law, he had any right to expect. On these three men the light had fallen, and considering the wide difference in their circumstances, it is a difficult matter to decide to which of the three it brought most blessing, or in which of the three it wrought the greatest change. They were bound together by one new faith. They shared with each other the fruits of their several experiences; they had a common fund of joy to which each gave all he got. But there was still another tie binding them to each other and to their new faith; it was the irrepressible desire to extend, on every hand, the knowledge of their simple remedy for one-half the ills of life—to carry to the little ones of other homes the crumbs which fell from their own children's table. They conspired; they met in unrecognized assembly—by night—armed; but their conspiracy was to dethrone a fiend; their armour was the truth, which had made their own souls free, and they met, not in hatred towards any man, but in pitying

love for all men. They met to devise and to consecrate with heartiest appeals to Heaven the means of a crusade against the enemies of their brother men. It was in this triple band that the historian finds the germ of that Society which, with the blessing of God, has merited in many a household of the town of Arlton, the sweet name—"The Friends of Home." Mr. Barton was, indeed, by his position and the devotion of nearly all his time, revered as the founder; but if God had not given him these clear bright seals, his principles would not have led him to the conception of an apostolate so extensive and so blest.

The name which these three friends ultimately assumed and shared with their associates in the good cause of temperance, was suggested to Mr. Barton very early in his course of house-to-house visitation, discovering, as he did, the constant and necessary connexion between well-frequented taverns and miserable homes. He became, in the best sense, a town missionary, ever on the alert for opportunities of quiet, kindly, substantial interference, or rather intermediation; for he soon perceived that even where both heads of a household were enslaved by habitual drinking, their common sin only too surely divided their interest in twain, and constituted them mutual foes, and a joint curse on their hapless children. A mediator was imperatively called for where neither party could or ought to pay any regard to the remonstrances of the other, while the wandering, stunted, naked, dying children, sent right into the father's tender heart an irresistible appeal for pity and protection. The natural delicacy of Mr. Barton's mind had preserved him during his professional life from assuming the antics of priestly authority, and it was not likely that in his ex-professional efforts for the good of men, he should degenerate into an intermeddler and busybody, or that he should—like so many of our smart seminary priests—usurp the functions of the beadle, and trench upon the privileges of the town jailer. It was not his plan at all, which we witness in course of operation in so many villages and country towns, where a worthy curate will drop down like a meteoric-ball from the skies, and forthwith roll himself about *till the neighbourhood is all in a blaze*. He did not adopt the

very simple but self-defeating plan of one of his brethren in a country village, who arranged his first parochial survey much after the following fashion. Calling suavely at No. 1 cottage, in a good long row, he would, after a few kind preliminaries, open his commission of inquiry on the state of next door; then repeating, or, as we might say, adjourning the commission to No. 2, he satisfied his mind on the several important points of the habits, modes of life, amount of wages, vices, follies, faults, and catching diseases in regard to the No. 1 he had just quitted; and so on, through the row, and through the hamlet, until, all being ready and recorded in a bright red steel-clasped memorandum book, he opened fire on No. 1, with—

“I understand, Mrs. Pybus, you and your children earn £2 a week; I am sure there must be some gross mismanagement, some wilful waste, some wicked indulgences, to leave you so filthy and ill-dressed, and keep you from church. Now look at me —”

“Sure an’ I will, if ye’ll show me the back of ye, and swear ye’ll niver show your dog face at that door again; will ye be off, ye spalpeen thief of a priest?”

Then again at No. 2 :—“I don’t exactly understand, my friend, how you continue to have steak-pie on a Sunday, if you do nothing but walk for wagers which you always lose.”

“What’s that to you? Are you longing for a bit, makes you so very particular asking?”

“But I wish to warn you—you’re a notorious poacher, and you’ll have the police with a search-warrant looking into your pie some of these Sundays.”

“Thank you, sir, but I always fetches and carries the pie myself, and if it’s any comfort to you to know it, I can fight as well as run, and more than one of the county peelers could tell you the same story—so, as you seem a neighbourly sort of a prig, why I don’t mind now, if you won’t abuse the liberty, any Sunday you’re particularly hard up for a dinner, I’ll give you a bit of the brown crust; I generally throws it away, you see, and you might as well have it as not.”

"You impertinent low person—what do you mean? I'll have you up for insulting a—a—a government officer in the execution of his duty."

"Oh, you're a detective, are you. Here away pups—Shaker! Blot! Voucher! Voucher!" Bow-wow-wow—and exit the curate out of the frying-pan No. 2 into the fire No. 3. An elderly flaccid female, the presiding genius of the wash-tubs at which less elderly, but, no less flaccid and damp Kantippes were battling with billows of suds. "Oh, Mrs. Lush, I won't hinder you long, but I must insist upon it that if you do go on having rum in your tea, you'll go to hell."

"Go yourself, and leave me to follow, you loose-tongued blackguard, what do you mean by insulting a lone woman in her own house? I'd try and be above it, I would. I'd scorn to stoop to such a mean action, though I didn't wear a whity-brown choker, washed at home I'll lay a guinea. Come, bundle, and when I want you I'll let you know, so you needn't ill-convenience yourself in the least by calling any more."

Now this case, which is almost literally true, was doubtless exceptional in the matter of degree, and we instance it for the purpose of showing that Mr. Barton was not so utterly and outrageously enthusiastic as to forget all prudence and common sense, even though he had become that fanatical thing, a Total Abstainer, and even though he was a nominal clergyman into the bargain—exceptions are seldom adopted as models by well organized minds, and our worthy founder had no predisposition for the grotesque in the graver duties of life. To any one influenced by less holy motives it would have been most discouraging to find that the poor had been so inured to wretchedness, were so wedded to it by habit, that it looked as if they preferred it; and had, as man is created to do, so thoroughly adapted themselves to their circumstances of debasement and beggary, that they had lost all desire for a freer and happier existence—all hope, all confidence in their fellow creatures—all remembrance of God. But Mr. Barton had a soul that, though never of an heroic cast, had been purged by fire, and it was not easily daunted by the want of success, or even by fierce opposition. He became a denizen of the lowest neighbourhood. His figure,

and step, and voice were better known than that of the watchman, and, what was of far more solid interest to the wretched inhabitants, the colour of his money was no longer a secret in any direction. For a considerable time he had no allies but Simpson and the miller, and they could help him little except on Sunday. But he felt that he was not alone—that ever on his right and on his left the unseen hand was shielding him or guiding him by a way he knew not, to ultimate success. He was confident that he had engaged in the cause of one who can afford to suspend the result, in order that the result may be astounding and glorious. Occasionally he had turned aside from his original course, to experiment on the class above the poorer workman, but he had such an insight into their selfishness, and such slight hopes of ever gaining an inch against their wilful and made-up minds, that he turned into the old paths with sensible relief, and the comparison awakened in his mind a more cheerful hope for the poor. When some few families had been rescued through his agency from the curse, and had begun to show the solid value, the easily calculated advantages of the new doctrine, that doctrine asserted itself with an unction which even Mr. Barton lacked. The half-asleep drones at the public-house doors were sufficiently mystified when they saw, Sunday after Sunday, more finery, more food, more gaiety, or more church-going in their own quarter. They thought trade must have all gone to the mills or weaving sheds where these neighbours happened to work; or if they were in the same shop, they muttered jealous misgivings as to the master's impartiality, or the labourer's honesty; and it was only by a slow and unconscious train of reasoning that they were at last persuaded to try the Total Dodge themselves. Then they in their turn became the cynosure of heavy blood-shot eyes at tavern doors. The masses were thus slowly but surely stirred—and the heaven found its way through the lump. Now we know that however tall, and golden, and brazen, and heavy the image of a people's idolatry may be—if once you can get fairly at the clay feet, and crumble or *smash* them as opportunity favours, the upper god will soon *be nodding to its fall*. And it came to pass that in this very

town of Arlton, the image to which all of high and low degree did homage gave some shaky symptoms of a fate like Dagon's. The shopkeepers felt the electric shock of a new life in trade—they knew it could not be “a large foreign order,” for the mills were hardly at work at all—they did not know—they did not like to press their little hints about times mending into formal enquiries—but their minds were suddenly enlightened by an event which burst like a bomb in the enemy's very magazine. This event was nothing less than the sudden conversion of the popular and prosperous young Mr. Puncheon, who had given up the bar on the death of his father, that he might look after the £20,000 that father had bequeathed, and the still more valuable wine trade which had by its extent, doubtless, and attendant anxieties, hastened the elder Mr. Puncheon's decease from brain fever. This man, as Jarvis of the “Nag's Head” in the market-place swore, had turned frightened and spooney—had fallen into the old parson's clutches who had blazed away at him till he was daft and persuaded him to give up the accursed trade and start in the penance line, with a capital of £20,000. Whatever was really the fortunate cause of this surprising resolution there could be no doubt of the fact—the public had lost an important minister to their vitiated appetites, and the “Friends of Home” had gained a most amiable secretary. The extent of the sacrifice which Mr. Alfred P. (he did not like the old name now) had made, was an argument that came home to men's businesses and bosoms. What must be the gain and the intrinsic value of a principle that lead a man to sluice his own vaults, and deliberately throw away above a thousand a year. They, the tradespeople, hoped they were as religious as their neighbours, or as there was any occasion to be in this world. They were quite as hot and spicy in their political sentiments as they well could afford to be, but it passed their utmost imagination that there ever could be anything to compensate for the loss of a thousand a year, while not a few would have undertaken to burn the parish church down, and get transported for life, for a third part of the income of their spirit-dealing neighbour, even though it never could be of any use to them. Although, then, the unguided

reasonings of the respectable middle-class folks did not lead to a fully satisfactory conclusion on the one mysterious question, they were not without a beneficial effect—as we gather from the records of the vigilant Mr. Alfred P., who makes a note very early in his Teetotal semi-official diary of the interesting fact that more than one hundred tradesmen had adopted the plan of paying discounts in copper instead of in gin.

Something worthy of the name of a society was very speedily knocked up by the genius for method which had been from childhood the distinguishing glory of Mr. Puncheon's eldest son. His preparation for the bar had only brought out his methodising talents into fuller play. He, and everything about him was always in the right place and doing the right thing—that is, the best thing in the circumstances—as for instance—when he rose with his first brief, and found he could not, after several attempts, get further than the striking exordium, *My Lud!* his method required that he should sit down, which he did, and henceforth he systematically held his tongue. It was not merely the zeal of a new convert that animated him; it was a general ambition which having encountered a check in one direction, speedily found vent in another, thus affording a censorious world an opportunity of judging what a hard-working, devoted, and triumphant barrister had been lost to mankind and his country, through a slight tendency to wool in his mental constitution, and a slight stutter in the articulation of his otherwise burning eloquence. Mr. Barton was delighted and stimulated by this valuable accession. He felt that he had got the key of the position, and he knew it could be only a question of time; but he relaxed no effort, he withdrew none of his cordial and devout interest,—he even increased his former generous gifts,—nor did his personal labours ever slacken, till the chills of death were creeping over him.

BOOK V.
THE CURSE WORKING.

“Be advised ;
Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot
That it doth singe yourself.”

HENRY THE EIGHTH.

“Blind fear, that seeing reason leads, finds safer footing
Than blind reason stumbling without fear ; to fear
The worst oft cures the worst.”

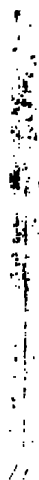
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

“Sometimes we are devils to ourselves,
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency.”

Ibid.

“They that mean virtuously and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.”

OTHELLO.



Book Fifth.

THE CURSE WORKING.

CHAPTER I.

PARTIAL REVIVAL.

THE contents of the last book may be regarded as an unjustifiable interruption if the reader pleases ; and in that case he will have an opportunity of estimating the extent to which one may carry parenthesis run mad. But it would be a safer conclusion to regard every word therein written as bearing, more or less, on the theme which suggested the retrospect, viz., Mr. Barton's state of mind at the time when the astute Mr. Drake was deliberately slicing, in something very like halves, the income and the property of the father for the benefit of the son—or, to speak more accurately, for the aggrandizement of the new daughter-in-law. It was our business to account for the comparative and most rare indifference of the elder party in the case, and we trust that, to many readers, the account presented is quite adequate ; for surely there are not a few of them who have passed the low down stage of moral culture, in which the love of money is ever the most conspicuous and operative motive of human conduct. In the mind of Mr. Barton, the passion of doing good had driven out the passion of getting gain or hoarding wealth ; while the kind of good he sought to do, as well as the sanctity of the source from which that new best passion sprang, contributed a chastened tone to the nuptial gladness of the hour.

We now resume the narrative of Sarah's wedding ; not that we may display great lore, and taste, and pathos in the millinery and sentimental line, but merely to show how bright

and rosy may be the morning of a day, which yet shall go down in storm.

We were nearly saying that the business had at length passed from the lawyer's to the bridesmaids' hands; but, standing rebuked, we remember that Mr. Drake did not suffer any, the least part, of the whole series of businesses to be snatched out of his hand until all was over, dinner included, and the gay postilions brandished their whips in his face, and whisked his incumbrance away. Charles would fain have launched out a little more stylishly, but he respected the delicate taste of his bride. Charles suffered his mind to be filled for days with the red brick picture of St. James's church; but Sarah leaned to St. Mary, Woolnoths; and Nathaniel compounded the force of these preferences into a diagonal invasion of St. Andrew's, Holborn, where he was wont to sit, and stand, and kneel, and chop responses inaudibly on Sundays and on Christmas-days. Charles would have twelve bridesmaids; but Nathaniel's remonstrance rose like ocean's billows. "Twelve! he would not have twelve women in his house at one time—no, not for all he was worth in the world: besides, he could not if he would. Where could he put them? If they came to church, they might stay there, and spend the day as they ought, in *sobriety* and SILENCE: he wouldn't have them turning his house into Bedlam. He proposed two—it did not matter who; perhaps it would be cheaper to have two, like mutes, and then they need not stay all day. Give them a glass of wine, and a couple of shillings each, and a piece of cake, and very good pay too." But though Mr. Drake ruled as far as number went, Sarah was despotic—nothing could turn her; and no wonder, if all was true that we have heard. She had given her solemn word and honour, long before she had ever seen Charles, that the two Miss Henbanes in the Strand should be her angels, if ever she should want any angels for a bridal occasion. And so Carlotta and Mariana Henbane were the foregone conclusions against which Buccaneer, Bridegroom, and the dismal Mottram railed in vain. The Buccaneer knew the set well, and he hated according to *knowledge*. Charles had such a spite against the elder, for *what he* called her green-eyed malice, that he had more than

once caught crabs with his oar, just for the pleasure of splashing her all over ; and Mr. Mottram had conceived a well-founded horror of Miss Marian, from the fact that he had seen her more than once in the park reading a Testament. But, in truth, that Testament was a greater comfort to her than Mr. Mottram could guess ; for she needed some help other than earth seemed likely to yield. She was deformed and very ugly, and, what was sadder still, she had very hard work to be even decent in her temper, though, it must be confessed, she had put down the valve this day with a new patent screw, and let off no more than one little splenetical whistle, one little cantankerous paradox—"That she wasn't sure, not quite positive, but she did think it wasn't heavenly-minded to get married." Good Mr. Nathaniel yielded in this one respect as graciously as any man could be expected to do, who had everything else his own way ; and he seemed to be perfectly satisfied that the grave young spinsters should be permitted as a background to the lively hilarity of the time, just as his old friend and troublesome patron, the Dowager Countess of Thorpe, always wore black Genoa velvet and dirty lace, to set off with vigour the glow of the family brilliants. He did not regard his own exercise of authority as that of a mere tyrant, self-willed and solely self-considering ; but as that of a paternal monarch who knew and decreed exactly what would be the best for those who could not be expected at such a time to know either their own interests or their own minds ; so that when the train returned from St. Andrew's to his own house, he greedily sought even from the bilious-looking, teeth-chattering Henbane girls that meed of praise which he felt to be his due.

"Couldn't have been better, now ; all went off first-rate, didn't it, my dears ? And I declare I thought it uncommonly good taste, and a mark of very proper respect in old Briscoe, to have his curate for a clerk ; and the two together, you see, were quite as good as a bishop, or at least a dean."

"He appeared to be much moved with the awful responsibility of his position ; and I'm not surprised he should have hesitated before taking such an awful and eternal step," murmured Miss Mariana, just in good time to drive Mr.

Drake back into his shell of prejudice, whence he had emerged thoughtlessly into the deep waters of debate. It was just in time to prevent him from building up his vanity any higher on the false foundation of Miss Henbane's anticipated sympathy and praise.

It is perhaps more usual for the mind to be led by sorrow to the contemplation of things unseen ; but it is not less natural that happiness should suggest by association as strongly as grief by contrast, the blessedness that endureth for ever. The Prince de Ligne has said with equal beauty and truth, "that happiness always fills a good heart with religious feelings," and we have only to add to this statement, that there will be found in every case a correspondence between the kind of religious feelings produced, and the nature of the happiness producing. In the case of our Sarah, there was a happiness that, after all, was more akin to heaven than earth. Her union with Charles was not so much the gratification of a wish or a relief to an impetuous passion, as the fulfilment of a prayer that she might be nearer to his soul, and that she might assist the immortal nature in its strife with sin and mortal ills. God had given him to be her teacher and guardian for earth, and her pupil for the world to come. Not for a moment did she dream of intruding her peculiar opinions, or even her deepest religious experience, upon the stage of daily business ; as if it were the sole object of her life to make him a second self, a true and polished mirror of her real or fancied piety. No, her belief was that in his noble character the element of Divine love would work far more mightily and gloriously than ever it had done in herself ; but she was glad because the Lord had made her the vestal watcher of a flame that might not be allowed to die. Her heart then was crowded with religious feelings of the best kind. Religion was the source of her rejoicing—and religious were the feelings that rushed with each blood-tide through her heart.

Charles, too, was happy. To look on, he was even more joyous than his bride ; not wild and frivolous, but full even to weeping of his great joy. His happiness was more earthly *in its texture*, it arose from the fact that earth bloomed like *Paradise* for him ; not that the gate of heaven was thrown

on—that his span of mortal life was assured now of all
 ss that man could wish or gain. His narrow range of
 ought was quite filled up with the one-half, the less part of
 a great gift of God that day. Like one who has but counted
 lf his unexpected and most welcome treasure, he closed
 a casket all too soon, and lifted up to heaven half-hearted
 aise. He was filled with religious feelings, for a thankful
 bute to the God of providential bounties is religious in its
 ad ; it is not of the religion that is sought and found ; it is
 edience to a human feeling, not to a Divine law ; it is,
 mparatively speaking, the gratitude of a pauper who knows
 t and cares not for the parchment which makes him a free
 n and a prince, but gives out all his heart in thanks for the
 stance of a shilling.

There are many who would admit that happiness does pro-
 ce religious feelings ; and yet they would object that it
 es so as the river does the sea—itsself is engulfed. This,
 wever, is not true in the case of spurious religious sentiment ;
 is by the very nature of the case false in the instance of
 nuine piety. There was nothing surely in Mr. Charles's
 :vent gratitude to God, to repel the love of his bride, or to
 fle his love for her. There was no incompatibility between
 at joyous love which knows no language, and that ardent
 aise which attempts no song. Still less was to be appre-
 nded in the case of Sarah, from the permanence and power
 religious feelings ; for to take the lowest view we can,
 ery one to his taste, and we say that with her, religion and
 easure were not only commensurable, but they were almost
 entical terms. To say that religion is fatal to pleasure, is
 absurd as to say that the pursuit and possession of wealth
 an avaricious man is positive pain. Religion cannot be
 gaged in at all except by a heart that cares very little com-
 aratively for anything besides. You may truly say that it
 not to your taste, just as Charles's groomsman, a terribly
 etical man from Oxford, could not, for the life of him,
 e anything in Sarah ; wondered, in wild conspiracy with
 ottram, what in the name of all the powers Charles could
 e in a spiritless pale-faced school girl like that ; and had
 edicted *oracularly*, *Mottram* doing the echo part, that Charles

WAS, SURELY, OF THE DARGAH BEFORE THE DAY MONTH: just as CHARLES HIMSELF THOUGHT SOME TWO MONTHS AFTER, WHEN HE RETURNED THE JOY'S COMPLIMENT. WHATEVER WOULD BECOME OF HIS AFFAIRS WITH A GREAT, SINGING, TRAGEDY-QUEEN OF A WOMAN, WHO LOOKED AS IF SHE WOULD SWEETEN THE feeble-bodied spouse TO DEATH WITH A CHANCE OF SINGING HIM BY AS A LION MIGHT A VERY TENDRE AND TENDERLY THOSE WORDS ON PUPPY. In both these cases we can only say, that one could not judge for the other, and either would have resented the opinion of the other, as not only unkind, but entirely wrong of the truth. One was *deeper*—*deeper*, really, *fundamentally* in love with our Sarah; the other was *deeper*, really, *fundamentally* in love with the celebrated beauty of a Norfolk breed, the Honourable Stephanie Blazeaway: and for anything we ever heard to the contrary, the one just remained as much contented with his delusion as the other. We say, then, that unless a man be in love with religion, he has nothing to do with it at all; knows nothing about it. He sees other people wooing it, and apparently making a great deal of it: but he does not understand it. He may think he could not be happy with Sarah, or, if Charles, with the fiery-haired princess: but the truth is, he does not know what he would be if he were ever smitten and in love. He may go even further, and say, upon a very imperfect induction indeed, that love is folly and nonsense, and waste of time, and altogether a very gloomy affair; but the fact of the matter is, he knows nothing about it, and cannot do till he falls in love himself; and then we old hands know very well whereabouts the cynic will be. So when men pretend to associate religion with gloom or anything else, they are simply playing at random; they know nothing about it, and cannot do until they are religious themselves, and then the old M. the lists, as Mr. Mottram despitely called them, know pretty nearly where their whereabouts will be.

In both hearts the happiness of the bridal produced, each after its kind, religious feelings which by no means reacted on their joy unfavourably. The presence of deeply-seated thankfulness was the best proof that the happiness was deep too. The lawyer unbosomed himself to a marvellous degree, told the tale of his own and his private version of Sarah's

ove, with equal and merciless minuteness ; and not content with this measure of sport, he so far forgot himself as to rally his wife about her first love, and was verging very near to Mr. Barton's sore memories, when, to the great relief of all parties, Mr. Mottram rushed into the room aghast, like one of the messengers or heralds on the old Greek stage—to announce that there was a fire broke out two streets off, and the travellers' carriage was at the door.

The former part of this confused announcement dropped orthwith into the back scenes before the much more exciting act that the hour for separation had come. Champagne had made all ready both above stairs and below for any amount of explosion required, and the evil-speaking prophet had fired the train. The two angels felt that the main action of the piece was come, and that it devolved on them ; so, to get up the needful amount of nerve, we suppose, they abandoned themselves to bitter tears, nursing the while a genuine remorse for their own share in the sacrifice, and vainly pleading by their excessive misery for the sympathy and solace of the young poet from Oxford ; and when the blooming Mrs. Drake had captive the blushing Mrs. Barton, and closed the door with a sound like a coffin lid, Charles grew desperate, and Athaniel had violent recourse to a metal pocket-comb, which he wielded so imprudently as to inflict counter-irritant gashes in the recesses of his whiskers. But the end will come, however long it may seem to such as Mr. Charles, or however it may be deprecated and fenced off by legal chicane. And in less than a quarter of an hour from the first grim announcement, the chariot and four, with the post-boys, and Mr. Charles, bore away the little encumbrance, and left the home of the lawyer to all the conceivable pleasures of its new found freedom.

It had been arranged that their honeymoon should be spent at their new home at Mylden—perhaps owing to the idea of Mr. Drake, that if they had not the bustle of coming back from the Continent, or back at all from anywhere, they would never find out that the honeymoon was over. The Hall had been given by Mr. Barton. He had no wish to reside there himself ; *his heart was not there*, but it was in the old vault.

Indeed, he only hesitated about giving the house of his father to his children, from the fear that he never could bring himself to revisit the spot even to share, and thus increase their joy. It would be wrong for us to follow them for the purpose of prying into that strange bliss, the chief element of which is privacy. It is manifestly wrong to try to penetrate the veil of the bridal moon, because after a year or two it is found to be impossible. The best memoried and most anxious of men fortunately cannot recall either the folly or the luxury of the swift first days of married life. Most men would feel too much ashamed to do it, if they could, and those who long hard enough to try back would, if they could succeed, be rendered unhappy and discontented with the detected change. It will be enough to rest assured that whatever happiness does ordinarily belong to that mysterious seclusion was theirs, and a little, a very little, more than the average may fairly be supposed.

There was a latent expectation in the village of Tatton, from the rector down to the publican, that something was the matter at the Place ; but, on the whole, the thing was admirably managed ; there was no bell-ringing, no bonfire, not one barrel of ale broached, beyond the two or three of every-day life ; and the heir of Mr. Barton, with his beloved wife, stole home as much like a thief in the twilight as the despisers of ostentation could wish. Only on the following Sunday was the mystery solved—the mystery of hammers, and brushes, and van-loads of furniture, which had surrounded the old house for many weeks before.

In the spring tide of his nuptial happiness, Charles felt as if he had at length begun to live. He shook off, with scarcely an effort, the dull misanthropy which had early threatened and had partly taken possession of his mind. It seemed to him that there must be some claim to his affection and confidence, even in the most heartless of a race which had produced so much gentle goodness, and that the Great Being who had made the world, so productive and so beautiful, had not wholly forsaken, nor unsparingly cursed the home of his creature man. In the blest interchange of thought which succeeded to the first silent rapture, he felt as if he had no

to repay in kind the riches of ennobling faith and life-giving hope, which Sarah lavished at his. He could only love and bless the dear one with tenderness and thanks, and raise to Heaven a votive offering of love and self-devotion. He would be her's as she was—assist her every sacrifice, kneel first in her train when she went up to worship, and with what ardour she adored her father, he would adore his wife.

Nothing in their new circumstances was favourable to a quiet life, and they could not discern either a cloud in their bright sky, or the horizon beneath which their cheery day might set. The old neighbourly relations which had proved so useful to Mr. Barton had been so long suspended, and in places so completely broken, that Charles possessed all the advantages of a stranger, in regard to the selection of his friends, and at the same time, all the real privileges of a son, whenever he chose to occupy his hereditary position among the old county families. The property more immediately around the Hall had been fully redeemed, and considerable improvements had been made in the work of clearing from encumbrances large portions of the more valuable lands. The family had kept alive in the heartiest manner the remembrance of Mr. Barton's generous administration, alike in the management of the law, and rents. They had never for one moment given in to the malicious insinuations of meddlers, that the old stock was ruined, and would soon die out, for that the will of God was on it. It was treason in their eyes to suppose that the old house and the good old estate could ever pass out of the hands of a Barton. They were all eminently conservative, seeing very clearly, no doubt, how much depended on the continuance of the line in which a family, and thus inalienable right of proprietorship is vested. Long years of absence might perhaps have cooled the ardour of their personal attachment, though the lapse of time could have been insufficient to erase from their family minds the belief that, come who might in the meanwhile, the Bartons would come again one day. Their personal feelings for the stricken father was not, however, suffered to

cool ; for though they never saw him now at the rent dinner, and were obliged to transact all their business, little and great (complaints included), with the agent or steward, they had reason to suspect that in his affectionate and most difficult smiles,—in his deeply interested enquiries touching the rot in sheep, hares in turnips, birds in barley, as well as measles generally, whether in cattle or children,—most particularly in his willingness to make cash-down allowances for the depredations of game, and to grant concessions (the very hinting at which made the burly farmer blush) about cutting timber, and right of way, and rotation of crops, and snug little leases, and occasional cottages, with no end of privileges of all sorts,—we say, that in all these respects, the rather heavily moving, but on the whole safely-balanced agricultural mind decided that Mr. Grogram was an automaton,—or more truly, and at the same time more intelligibly, that he was, as he sat in the Fleece at the old public-house, a first-rate puppet show, worth any one's penny to see ; but that Mr. Barton, wherever he might be, really pulled the strings, and did the talking part himself.

Their personal regard for Mr. Barton was thus kept alive, and warm, for it was not within the limits of possibility that Mr. Grogram, who was the bugbear of some half-dozen estates in the neighbourhood, could justly appropriate any share of the gratitude and respect with which the farmers attended his half-yearly levee. It all went, like the rent, through the steward to the landlord. Accordingly, the settlement of Mr. Charles was hailed with the most unbounded satisfaction by all parties, saving and excepting, perhaps, Mr. Grogram, who was influenced not so much by definite objections, as by the vague apprehension,—for truly there was no knowing how soon his royalty might succumb to the machinations of the well-known Nathaniel Drake. His only comforting reflection was, that his fellow-lawyer was in such a great deal better practice than himself that he would hardly be able to devote as much time as would be necessary to unship a steward of some twenty years standing, who knew all the ins and outs of the estate. *So that* even he was able to conjure up a very captivating *smile* when he came to pay his duty, and the rents, to the

heir of the late proprietor. In his steps, as was becoming, the older, then the younger tenants, and after these the labourers, the women, and then the better-looking part of the children, crowded to pay their respects, and to offer of their substance a kind of feudal homage, or peppercorn rent, as an acknowledgment of a new lord. In brief, there was everything to induce Mr. Charles to look upon himself as an exceedingly fortunate person—rich in the rents and affection of his tenantry, at option in the formation of his circle—surrounded with attractions to useful and salutary employment, and within and beyond all, he possessed the priceless treasure of a home thrice blest—a home in which plenty reigned—which a wife's love pervaded, and around which was flung the curtain of his own perfect content. The simple fact of entering his new home a married man defended him from the annoyance which had beset his father's accession—the quizzing, and flattery, and disinterested counsels about matrimony, and nameless musk-scented gilt-edged valentines—from all such traps he was free. He had been caught on somebody else's ground, and he was a prisoner for life; so they, the speculating spinsters, quizzed his wife instead of courting him, then spitefully left him to his fate. His probable position and extent of influence in the county, moreover, was sufficiently problematical to moderate the zealous attentions of the great families. They knew that he was in a different and most likely worse position than his father had been, and they were disposed to argue, that if the elder Mr. Barton with all his undeniable advantages had been content to croon his old-fashioned life away in the obscurity of a village curacy—it was hardly likely that the son would have the pluck, with his dilapidated fortune, to aim at anything very great in the political world—so after many domestic consultations it was resolved by some that he was not worth seeking, but he might be worth while watching; by others, that it would cost nothing to be civil till they could take his measure satisfactorily, and then they would know how to act. The still flourishing circle of jovial, hunting, horse-racing, King and Church defending squires were even more puzzled than their *spouses and daughters*, as to the points of the young stranger,

and the chances for and against their being able to rank him as one of their set. They had a pious horror at the very thought of the vulgar-minded father who had preferred the stupid drudgery of a parson's life to their own high and riotous living. How would the young kid turn out? That was the question of questions for several weeks. They were in no hurry—they could wait till he'd got enough of his wife's company, and wearied for change. Whatever contrariety there might be in their other sentiments, there was perfect unity on this point; they could keep their patience till the inevitable decline of the love fit, for they knew that in the worst case, it could not be very long. They were all exceedingly busy all day, for it threatened frost, and the foxes were both plentiful and wild. They were exceedingly tired and drunk all night, so that Patience with them was Necessity made Virtue.

CHAPTER II.

CORRUPT AMBITION.

WE have said, and we are free to repeat, that in the bright prospect which their union and sweet love lighted up around them, there was neither cloud nor any very marked line of horizon; but the same might often be said of the mariner lolling on deck, but would have to be unsaid immediately the mariner shifted his point of view from the deck to the main royal-yard; for not unfrequently in that position he is able to make out clouds of which he was not dreaming before, and occasionally he can discern, by the dark ridge in the sky, that the wild waste of waters hath its appointed bounds, or, by the white ridge of foam on the waters, that the sea hath its sunken rocks. So with Charles and Sarah. So long as they nestled in their fresh-leaved bower, they could see no bound and no interruption to their bliss; but when, by force of circumstances, their point of view was changed, Charles *saw*, with uncontrolled emotion, the towering peaks of Life, and Sarah thought she saw the breakers. The rock on which

his student life had stranded was sunk very near the land, which he now looked with the old longings of ambition. His soul was inflamed by a phrenzical determination to obtain access and power in some way or other, and though love had for a time assuaged the intense and extravagant desire, soon appeared to lend new fuel to the flame. The voice which bade him back only maddened him to go forwards, and attempt some deed which, if accomplished, might prove him worthy of so much reverent love, and furnish glory for the new name which he had given to his bride. But, in reality, this impatience was an evidence of declining love and reviving selfishness. He could not endure the sense of inferiority which stole painfully into his heart when he contrasted his unmarked life with that of others, of his equals in age; nor was he content that his young wife should be compelled to dwell upon his gentler qualities, in the absence of more stirring traits of character. He knew she had under the placid exterior a heart that could swell and pant to the history of heroic and glorious deeds. He had watched her fixed and eager glance, when, in the long evening hours, he had read to her of the warriors and stern patriots of Greece and Rome—and should there be no one deed of all his life to make that lip quiver and that bosom swell,—nothing to commemorate upon his tomb, when, in years to come, she should go there to weep,—nothing that should reprove mere sorrow and awaken proud memories within? He did not know the pleasure of success, for in the rivalry which is essential to that pleasure he had been foiled, and he could even depreciate at times the treasure he had obtained, as he remembered how slight was the effort it had cost. In all this there was very much that indicated a noble soul, and gave promise of a conquering future—much which no moralist ought to condemn; for if all men were destitute of this ambition, the progress of the race would be mournfully slow, and its history insipid. But there was this radical fault: the youthful ardour allowed no exercise of judgment, and ignored very often the authority of conscience. He did not count the cost of the means or the worth of the result. Conounding *success* with happiness, he was only too sure to

account all failure shama. To obtain the one, he knew no sacrifice too great—but he made no provision for defeat: if he should be vanquished, he was content to perish.

He had been attacked much in the same manner as his father, by the active touters of the two great parties in the State—Parties who were more than ever divided and hostile, and who were on the eve of that great contest which was to try the relative strength of youth and age, of the many and the few, of principles and expediency, of truth and prejudice. The long era of peace which followed the fight of Waterloo had been directly and indirectly favourable to the growth of Liberal opinion in politics; for, on the one hand, when Governments had no longer any urgent occasion, such as war, for propitiating and pacifying the people, full play was given to those exclusive and persecuting tenets which had long really constituted the main political theory of a powerful and jealous oligarchy. In the excitement of war, in the still more favourable frenzy of victory, these tenets had been in part suspended, and almost wholly unnoticed; but in the years that ensued, their revolting character was studied, criticized, perhaps exaggerated, by the thoughtful members of the governed class, while the great mass of the subject and unenfranchised people were goaded into madness by the palpable tyrannies perpetrated in the once dear name of the glorious constitution. England had shed her best blood to close the long and deadly proscription which resulted from the French Revolution, and now she claimed as her recompense the privilege of adopting in peace the sacred principles of liberty with which the great revolution in France had sprung into being. Their protest against the excesses of the Directory had been sealed with their blood; but their protest against tyranny and the rule of the strong arm had also been sealed with blood: in the one case they had given the most inviolable pledge for their own moderation, in the other they had thrown down the gauntlet, not to the man Napoleon, but to the principle of despotism, wherever it might be exhibited.

We have no intention of entering into the well-known *history* of the years during which the sterling worth of the *English* people was exposed to the most fiery trial since the

lays of Hampden ; and in which they showed, to a wondering world, how effectual had been the lesson afforded them by France ; how resolute they could be for rights ; how bravely they could contend for freedom ; and yet withal, how patiently, as a nation, they could bear the provocations of priestly and aristocratic and royal contempt. The course of our story leads us just within the enchanted circle where the great spirit of Reform was evoked and embodied, while his dark disguised foster-brother Revolution was strangled by the sage magician Common Sense.

It is our province to trace the connexion of Charles Barton with this great movement, in order that we may estimate its effect on a temperament so excitable and so subject to depression ; and help on the story of his life, that we may seize the lesson it conveys. We purposely postponed the notice of two remarkable drawbacks to the healthy character of his ambition ; drawbacks which, had they stood alone, would have vitiated success, if they did not ensure failure. In the first place, he was totally ignorant of the historical position of the question at issue ; and, in the second place (we blush as we write, for others besides Charles), he had no well-considered opinions on the one side or the other. The strife itself was enough to charm him from the soft dreams of domestic love ; and he rushed into it with all the glow of rivalry and ambition, but without the defensive armour of a clear, sound judgment and an approving conscience.

The agents for the Club were quite as subtle as in former days had been the Red Tape agents of Government, and assuredly Mr. Charles was no match for their skill, the result of a wide and varied knowledge of men and parties. Mr. Barton had been cased in the triple brass of an unalterable and holy resolution ; but Charles was destitute of any such accidental defence against their wily approaches, for his pledged love only exposed him still more to their designs, and, as we have seen, he had no innate or cultivated strength of mind. The waryouters soon completed their survey, which was both of a geographical and geological nature, and they carried back to those who had sent them, a very well drawn and convenient map to guide their strategical movements. They discovered,

on the surface, that he was simply aiming at personal distinction, and below, they more than suspected that his ancestral pride was getting its spurs on, and would, in all likelihood, fight on the old side. They could not report with certainty beyond the plain fact, that the young man hardly knew his own mind, and accordingly it was voted that he was not to be relied on. This vote would have put an end to the whole business, but for the additional report that a very powerful body of burgesses in the neighbouring town had, in answer to judicious sounding, expressed a somewhat sinister determination to vote for him if he should stand—choose what might be his principles—(and the touters understood all that sort of politics only too well)—further that the jovial squirearchy had contrived to get partial hold of the matrimonial recluse, and in their endeavour to corrupt his morals, they had discovered rare parts—that is, rare in those parts; and, what was of higher consequence, they found or thought his sentiments on the great question wonderfully accordant with their own; that these worthies had so worked on his ambition as to persuade him to stand for the county, and wagered heavily in his favour.

CHAPTER III.

AMBITION BAFFLED.

WHEN this addendum was delivered to the head-quarters of the Liberal camp, much perplexity was felt as to the best way of throwing the young squire overboard once for all; and in the wisdom of a sub-committee it was agreed that the two agents should repair once more to Mylden Place—should fall in with the humour of the hour—urge Charles, by all means, and with unlimited assurances of present help and eventual success, to stand for the county as a thorough-going Tory—in the hope that, as he was certain to be defeated, his means would be too crippled to enable him to contest the town, or to retain the good-will of the numerous freemen who had *made ready* to stretch their consciences just to the length of *his purse*, and not a thread beyond.

By this manœuvring they would contrive a signal influential demonstration on the Liberal side in the county, which might sell on the general election so confidently expected, and immediately afterwards enjoy the inward satisfaction of seeing the sulky unpurchased, and therefore unpurchasable freemen voting for a Reform candidate, for whose return there would be no chance if Barton should come to the field unhurt, with his long heavy purse in the girdle of his armour. It was a sagacious plan in whatever head it was matured, but though most carefully carried out, it was nearly knocked on the head by an occurrence which they could not possibly have taken into their consideration, as it was indeed about the last thing in the world that Charles himself would have expected. Charles had yielded some days previously to the urgent entreaties of the neighbouring gentry, and had made up his mind to stand for the honour of being knight of the shire, when the Reformers unmasked in the borough, and produced as their candidate no other than the identical Malkin whom Charles imagined he was flattering very grossly when he condescended to regard him as a thorn in his side, which he did not care to extract. The "horror" of Mr. Mottram, when he saw, and the indignation of his bosom when he announced the impudent candidature of a mere "scum" will never be forgotten in the kitchen of Mylden while the old house stands—or through all changes of servants and masters, the grim tradition haunts the place. The master was somewhat differently affected, but he fully shared the indignation of his faithful servant at the unaccountable audacity of a mere college prizeman, with a poor mother and an ill-bred wife, setting up in a town nearly one-third of which was, or had been, the property of the Bartons.

It did not enter into the thoughts of Mr. Charles that possibly even greater changes might have passed since their separation, in the circumstances of his rival than he himself had experienced; but there could be no doubt that, whatever else was changed, the resentful hatred with which Charles had once thought of Malkin was undiminished, nay, greatly aggravated by this seeming insult. He had been beaten by *this man on neutral ground*, and the conqueror had presumed

to defy him in his own stronghold. Could he endure such open and malicious insult? Ought he not to wipe out by a signal triumph—by the humiliation, and probably by the ruin of Malkin—the old rusty stain of defeat? He would drive him forth without mercy, and deliver him, as he himself had been delivered, to the scornful pity of the world. He would have preferred the county to the town, but he preferred the triumph of revenge to both. This alarming state of mind was soon laid bare to his counsellors, Messrs. Fritter and Chaff, and it required no ordinary exertion on their part to conceal their dismay and anxiety. What should they do? There was hardly time to reconsider and alter their whole plan. Should they withdraw Malkin, and put somebody else in his place? But then Malkin had proposed himself, and they had adopted him, just precisely because he was the only person on earth who stood any chance if Charles should come forward. Malkin was the poor son of a poor mother, but he was the grand-nephew of a tremendously rich old uncle, and that worthy old gentleman had left the hard-working law-student almost as many houses in the borough as there were votes to be given. That would never do, then; for if Malkin withdrew—which in itself was rather unlikely, though he was a trifle more patriotic than some candidates for Parliament)—Charles might walk over the course, and never have his clothes off. One desperate experiment remained, and as they belonged to the prevalent school of morality, in which the end, if in itself important, justified the means—they felt less scruple, and showed less modesty in the adoption of those means than more virtuous people might have wished. They printed placards announcing the withdrawal of Mr. Malkin, and posted them, not on the walls, but in the letter-box directed to Charles, who immediately experienced a relief, and reverted with all his impetuosity to his more daring adventure.

The excitement of an election is at all times of the intensest order—but at such a juncture as the present it was a lava torrent that raged and glowed, defying all resistance, and destroying old boundaries of decency, and morals, and religion. It ate its way into the very homes of hundreds who had been wont to laugh and sport as at a fair—even the meek

and almost frightened Sarah was drawn within this maelstrom—and that without any rational conception of what it was all about. All the economy of years was scattered like chaff amongst the flames. Money lost all its ordinary value—as the buyer of bread and wine, and ease and luxury. It had acquired a fiendish power. It bought votes, principles, strong inclinations, old friendships—yea, the very lives and souls of men. Who, with a patriot's soaring motives, could pause to count the cost of a country's safety—who, with a prize so glittering to ambitious minds, could weigh against success the paltry expenditure of gold? If Charles was reckless, he was but smitten with an endemic—all were reckless but the practised masters of the game who affected to be mad, but coolly watched the progress of the conflict. Defeat was from the first inevitable—but few knew how sure it was to come. To the last moment all was energy and uncertainty—the long wearying combat seemed to gather fury to its very close, and then there came the wild shout of a triumphant people, and the ominous groan of the county's rightful lords. But no groan broke the proud silence of Charles's grief. He was stunned, and but for the quick intrusion of one thought he would almost have died. The intelligence of his defeat reached him in London—but overwhelmed as he was for a time, he soon recovered so far as to order an immediate return to Mylden, that he might claim at least his hereditary borough, but what pen can do justice to that co-mingling shame and grief which closed in upon his soul when the ill-omened Mottram croaked out into his ears—"Oh, Mr. Charles, SCUM'S got it!"

CHAPTER IV.

COMFORTING LOVE.

THE affectionate wife hurried to London that she might bear her part in what she truly judged would prove the heaviest affliction Charles had ever known, and might, if not soothed and healed betimes, be the beginning of many sorrows. Love's instinct, however, had failed during their brief ac-

quaintance, in laying bare all the weakness, and pride, and selfishness of her husband's disordered nature. She remembered and still felt the glow of his burning passion for herself, and she trusted to its undecaying fervour for the full force of all her influence, and the effect of all her effort to save him from despair. But he had already drooped his sword point, and resigned himself to his evil fortune; when she came, she hardly knew him—how could he be so changed, and she as loving and as fair as ever. Ah, Sarah, your love was a pastime, and its bridal a holiday. Peace, and praise, and joy were the attendant ministers of the festival, but the sacred day had gone—the world and self had resumed their sway, and the pride which had rested for a brief space in the embrace of love was awake, had been struggling for very life, was now wounded and rankling in the husband's soul. He refused to be comforted, he could not bear the unasked sympathy of her from whom he had hoped to win the conqueror's welcome. Her presence was a vivid reminder of his shame; her counsels were puerile, founded in utter misconception of his state of mind, and spoken to the winds—the prayers to him were impertinence, and those to God a mockery. He did not violently reproach the loving one, nor drive her with curses from his sight; but the glassy stare, the unheeding absent manner, the curt cold replies, were even more agonizing than the mere brutishness which would on a mind like hers but have blunted all its point before it could have pierced her heart. She knew now some little of that despair which had almost dethroned the reason of her husband—her little all for this world had been ventured in his rich promise of a life-long love, and now that very love seemed bankrupt. She struck in turn each key that had been wont to yield to her lightest touch the music that she loved, but there was no answer now—the strings were loosened if they were not broken. Charles mastered himself sufficiently to speak kindly to his young wife, in the hope that he might spare her much of that sorrow which he knew would be his own sole portion now.

"Sarah, my love—this—this has unmanned me for a time; but all will be well by-and-by. I have been victimized and

befooled, and dishonour comes to one like me as a death-blow. I have survived you see, dear, for your sake, but henceforth pride and effort, and even hope, such as I have carried secretly in my breast through each change of life, all are dead. My love still lives, but it will be an ignoble portion for you—tame and fruitless—alas, you may come to despise it !”

“O, NEVER, my precious husband—never ! Do not think such cruel thoughts of me or of yourself. I know that you do love me—will love me more than ever, and that is all in all to me. Forget ambition, banish pride—be as God gave you to me first—loving, content, and a patient seeker of wisdom, a doer of good deeds, which alone are truly great—you were made to be the pillar and ornament of a Home. They who succeed in life’s fiercer trials know not the sweets and comforts which may be always yours. They waste the balm of life that their memory may be fragrant in death. Oh, sad exchange ! You are mine—you are God’s—the world shall not rend you away from either while I have life to love you and one lingering thought for prayer. Come, Charles, by our sweet love, still so young and precious, come and kiss me, and in the long days and nights of coming years we will gloat together over our hoarded love, unmindful of the world’s judgment ; as you have taught me—‘ We will applaud ourselves at home.’ ”

“ Yes, Sarah, I don’t doubt—that is to say, I rather believe at least, it seems on the whole the best thing to be done ; but you see I’m a very timid person for a butt—whether of the laughter or pity of my fellow men, and I don’t exactly like to expose myself to the (I fear) irresistible temptation of doing mischief to the first man I meet with a grin on his face or a palavering condolence on his lips. I should kill him sure as there is a God above. What right has any one to pity me ? I hold all condolence cheap—I hate the very name of pity. Yes, Sarah, in my present mood, I dare not mix with those I know, who know all my heart’s vanity and presumption, and must know, if they’re not utterly brutalized, how greatly I have lost and suffered. I would not for all worlds and all victory hereafter, endure their mocking, jibing

pity. Pity—ugh! I'd fall him as he stood, and trample him to death."

"You are excited, love; be sure none will dare to offer you the insult you dread. Think more highly of yourself, dear; if you saw yourself as I and indeed all others see you, you would never dream that any man would presume to pity you. There are fields which you have won, and they would surely have lost against you; think of those, Charles, and there are many other lists which you may enter with the proud certainty of one born for conquest—try these, Charles, and thus by wiser, calmer contrast, you will experience all that is healthy in the excitement of rivalry, and will surely reap all the glory of success. God is shutting you out of one sphere that you may the more freely and quickly find the right one; there alone has He decreed to bless you—come with me, and we will seek this hidden good together. He will bless you, dearest, but you must go where He points and leads you. He saw that disappointment, and perhaps great evil awaited you in public life; and so, in love to me and you, He drew the cloud before your vision."

"From love to you, Sarah, not to me; why did He suffer me to indulge such lofty hopes, and then crush them all, and so cruelly—was it Love to make me as I am—to implant such fiery longings in my nature, and then abandon me to public failure and to the contempt of men? Oh, Sarah! He does not love me. The only proof He ever gave me was when He gave me you; and now what is that gift?"

"It is unchanged, my love; oh! it is unchangeable, and a thousandfold more worthy now that it is yours."

"Would that I could think so! but I cannot. What rankling misery will be mine to think that you will henceforth be the object of a gossip's pity,—that malignant hags and peevish sluts shall dare to say, 'She is the wife of one who has outlived his impudent self-conceit—who has been taken down from his borrowed stilts, plucked at Oxford, beaten for the county in a stand-up fight with an empty-headed coxcomb, and thoroughly bamboozled out of his own borough by a couple of London sharpers. Lor', how came the chit to think of marrying him, I wonder.' Sarah, I cannot bear the

thought : I know it is not fancy—it will be so ; and the whispers of their malicious pity for my wife will drive me mad, and stain me with the crime of murder. Is this the first-fruit of a Father's love ? Could nothing serve His end but this exposure, this dishonour, worse than a thousand deaths ? I cannot say I love Him—it would be a lie ; and neither Bible theory nor saintly preaching, even such as yours, Sarah, shall drive me to the real disgrace of lying. He would not have my love when, in our joyous hours, I offered Him my full heart in worship : I recall the unaccepted gift. Let Him heap all His blessings on my wife, for she will need them all ; her husband is disgraced, and has no blessing left to give.”

“ Charles, you must not speak thus, if you love me, even if you do not love God ; for they are sadder words to me than if a tearful neighbour were to break my sleep this night, to say, ‘ Alas ! your Charles is dead.’ You are feverish : you have dwelt so long on this failure that you have dimmed your true judgment, and can only see the loathsome form of disgrace. Close those dim eyes ; lift up that troubled heart in prayer. My husband, you have sinned : let me not fold to my bosom an unforgiven one. Bethink you, dearest, that some blessings God stores deep down in my heart, but all the rest He lends to me on your account. Let not my barns be bursting, and my husband turn away in hunger. I will not, cannot forswear my covenant with God ; but to save you—ay, or even to comfort you, I would give my body to the burning. Blest charity ! that is one of the blessings which I said God gave me on your account.”

“ Well, I am wrong. I had resolved, before you came, I would not talk ; and now I grieve that I have so far laid open my mind, since it troubles you so much. I must fight alone with my pride.”

“ Not alone, Charles ? ”

“ Yes, love—alone ! I would not have you see the monster I have sheltered, till he is dragged forth, and slain ; and then, my princess (with constrained gaiety), I will imitate the great St. George,—place your scarf around his neck, and you shall drag him as your trophy where you list.”

After a pause of some minutes, Sarah made an effort to

speak. At first there was no sound but the convulsive sob of suppressed grief. Soon, however, she said, "And can I not help you? Why, indeed, has God given me to you? To be a burden and an eyesore—an intruder unwelcome and useless? Oh! if it be so, the blessing, as I thought it, was indeed a curse disguised. But, Charles, may I not be a silent watcher of your struggles? Will you forbid me to stand high and lift my arms to Heaven, till the victory is yours?"

"You can and will pray for me as effectually at home as here. I cannot go in my present mood; but you must, my Sarah, for a little while, only a little while, and I shall see new faces, feel new interest in new matters, and get over this sore rebuff, and I'm yours again for ever."

"It may be right and best, God only knows; but he knows, too, how hard it will be for me." And in a few hours they parted—these two whom God had joined—parted, to meet no more on earth. No more, we say; for there yawned already a gulf between them which they could just reach across; it was ever widening; it swallowed up all love that once had passed from heart to heart—all their infant joy, all domestic social comfort, all esteem, all confidence, all hope. They met, indeed, in the flesh—they consorted, and they dwelt together; but the love and piety of one heart, however great and strong, can never bridge the gulf of estrangement and selfishness. Hand must be stretched to hand; concession, effort, self-denial must be mutual, or the divorce of once united hearts is more complete than Death's. Sarah returned to Mylden with drooping spirits: her conscience, too, was far from easy. Had she done right in acceding to a request that did such wrong to her sincere and faithful love? Had she done wisely in forsaking that feeble soul in the very hour and power of darkness—a soul now doubly helpless and exposed, because it had renounced and distrusted God. In what form might not temptation come? How could she have encountered it, even had she stayed; still more might she fear that the word by letter would be powerless, for it would perhaps be written in ignorance of the truth. She might be contending with shadows, while her dear Charles was in the gripe of far other foes. Not that he would conceal or pervert the truth, but

that he might be as mistaken as herself, and so be ruined by surprise. She could but pray for him, give him into the hands of the good God, who would answer her desires or uphold her, even while refusing them. Nought remained besides. She turned again to the strong tower of heavenly Truth : she looked again into the depths of her own heart, and pondered on that evidence of Divine favour—the peaceful faith in the Divine promise—which her new human love had only rendered more unspeakably precious.

One promise she had extracted from her half-reluctant husband, and in the fulfilment of that promise she found great comfort. It was that he would frequently visit her worthy step-father, whose sincere common sense would, she felt certain, be the best antidote to the poison—the enervating poison of injured melancholy pride, which the world could supply. The first letter from London told her that she had not altogether exaggerated the influence for good which Nathaniel could exert over a mind like Charles's in its languid moods. The disappointed man speedily resumed his old defiant tone. What cared he for politics ? And if he did care, now he came to consider, he was a fool to go in on the old principles (Nathaniel had a most decided bias the other way), and it served him right ; he was glad now that he had been floored, so that, in reality, his defeat was convertible into a triumph. In his candidature he had represented the nonsense of half-educated, antiquated, country gentlemen, while in his defeat his real sympathies had been vindicated, and his private opinions had triumphed. His only regret was, that he had squandered such vast sums of money at the bidding of a fusty old party, whose doom was already sealed ; that he had not taken them at their first word, and thus secured repayment by bonds in black and white. "Never mind ; I shall soon be all right, and if I don't bring some of their old houses about their ears to the cry of Reform, never believe me, or that my name is Charles Barton." The letter which concluded in this very patriotic, but not very connubial style, had no occasion to specify the fact, so readily guessed, that it had been written immediately after one of Nathaniel's best dinners, and most energetic hobby trots ; for of late Sarah had often recalled

with something like horror, as became a country gentleman's wife, the violent heats in which Mr. Drake indulged when the subject of conversation verged anywhere near his semi-revolutionary theories of government. He was too wise a practitioner, and—(as he said, self-excusingly to those who wondered at his zeal, but wondered more, as they inquired—"Then why don't you set up for some snug little borough yourself, Drake?")—too much engaged in his profession, to take any prominent part in politics; but he made ample amends whenever he happened to enquire a bad-paying Tory client in the meshes of his hospitality, for he grew so furious that he generally had the satisfaction of converting the stickler for abuses by the forcible argument of present and personal abuse, persevered in to the bodily confusion and terror of his victim.

CHAPTER V.

PRACTICAL POLITICS.

IF the gay tone of Charles's letter to his wife had indeed arisen from a change in his principles, and a hearty resolve to devote himself to the advocacy of those principles from purely patriotic motives, there would have been every reason to hope, not merely that he had overcome the mortification of his defeats on the threshold of public life, but that his whole character would acquire both stability and energy of the best kind by a free engagement in the stormy politics of the period.

To one who had scarcely given a single hour's consideration to the topics now under angry and universal discussion, it was not surprising that the clear arguments of a practical man like Nathaniel should assume all the force of demonstration; nor can we wonder that such a scholar received impressions from his teacher which were as unalterable as they were new. There was no necessity for him to exert his independent judgment, so convincing were the one or two arguments his *instructor* condescended to use, and so overwhelming generally were the representations and demands with which the good

lawyer clinched or superseded mere argument. One consequence of this facility in receiving impressions was, that the influence of the truth received was cramped and feeble, so far as his own internal character was concerned. The maxims which pleaded with common sense, reason, and virtue, for a nation's freedom were well fitted to quicken the dormant powers of all who believed them, and to impart some of their own simple dignity to the character of their advocates. But when they were welcomed to the mind without any appreciation of their intrinsic power and worth, or when under the influence of ulterior motives, or riotous passions—they could do no good to the recipient, and could only secure strength for their own advancement by the accession of mere numbers. At the time when Charles received his first lessons in politics from his astute friend, his mind was warped and sore from recent humiliation, so that he never cared or stayed to weigh the claims of Reform, but rushed into the extreme views of his new party with a blind sense of his own wrongs. Assuredly the defective laws of the representation had as little to do with his defeat as in any case that ever occurred; but the bare idea of his double defeat, which somehow or other he guessed truly enough was the result of party manœuvring, was quite enough to stir up within his ill-regulated mind a fanatical desire to overturn, and injure, and destroy, in every direction, and for this purpose to lend himself to the movement which happily—(happily, we say, and may well say, when we reflect how rarely it has happened in the history of nations)—was fully under the control of its chief promoters. His, then, was the eloquence of *cant*. For patriotism was only an excuse for the outbreak of morbid dissatisfaction with the world and with himself. His was that dangerous zeal which is utterly incapable of self-control, and very seldom under any control—the zeal which is first an affectation and then a madness—a zeal which, in its fury, comprises all the lower passions, and disregards and deadens the guidance and remonstrances of the nobler elements of nature. His adhesion to the cause was accepted by far-seeing men, not on the ground of any supposed moral weight brought to their cause, but merely as the one of the thousand-and-one secondary helps to ultimate

success. For a time, however, it seemed far otherwise to the young adventurer. He was so little conversant with the world as to be profoundly affected with the fulsome praise which poured in upon him on every hand. He believed what they told him—(just once in a way for the sake of nailing him for ever)—that his standing and wealth were a sensible and highly appreciated addition to the machinery of their stupendous struggle. He was elated. He was comforted. The *vox populi* in Crown and Anchor meetings was a Lethæan draught which soothed and almost banished the recent trials from his remembrance. In the moments of graver self-examination, he was disquieted with his own ignorance, and with a ludicrous sense of his own hypocrisy; but this only led him to redouble his show of fidelity and zeal—to rave and rant yet more incoherently—to throw himself more than ever into the front, where the fire was hottest, and exposure was glory, until he became conceited—as all men do when they continue a show of fervour which their consciences have already belied, and his conceit became unendurable, constantly troublesome and distasteful; so much so that the great bulk of serious reformers felt very much inclined to kick him out of their ranks. And they virtually did turn their backs on him as soon as they were relieved from the misconception under which they had for a time suffered his nonsense and perilous proposals. His intimacy with the sagacious Nathaniel gave him originally a weight which his wealth and squireship would never have obtained for him. Nathaniel was well known to be averse from taking a prominent part in the business of agitation, and they would have been quite content with the valuable aid which they received from his private suggestions, so full were these generally found of that caution which inspires and rewards courage by prognosticating and greatly helping to the attainment of safe and final success. For a time, then, they had looked upon the young disciple as the exponent of Nathaniel's real sentiments—as the puppet moved by strings for the exhibiting of the showman's own thoughts. They often wondered at the rapidity with which one so proverbially prudent was being led into flighty notions and wild schemes; but at length they found out their mis-

take, when privately consulting the lawyer as to the best ways and means of bringing Charles in at the general election. For they heard him with equal relief and astonishment declare that if Charles ever did put up as a candidate, he himself would put up in opposition to him, and spend his last penny to beat him.

"What," said they, "have you quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled, bless you? Nothing of the kind; but if you only heard him rave, as I do every night, over a friendly after dinner bottle of wine, you'd as soon think of nominating the ghost of old Robespierre; it's all merry enough, and keeps one alive after a hard day's work, to see young blood boiling with fancy and fury, but I say, though I love him as my own flesh and blood, that for his own sake as well as for the cause, I would not suffer him to stand up with his crude and non-sensical balderdash, to represent the grave interests of a nation trembling on the verge of revolution."

After this very satisfactory explanation, of course the idea of making our young friend a member of a Reformed House of Commons was entirely laid aside. Charles was slow in discovering, because he was slow to believe it possible, that he was of little or no importance in the esteem of those for whose praise and gratitude he had so eagerly thirsted. Never did it occur to him that his services had been quoted at such a discount by his confidential friend, and it was well for him that such knowledge was withheld from him, for certainly it would have anticipated the rupture which did afterwards take place, and would have brought about that rupture in such a way as to render future reconciliation hopeless.

When the great crisis actually came, it found him unprepared to take any worthy part. Up to the very moment he had nursed the delusion that his sacrifices were appreciated, and his sincerity as well as power were thoroughly trusted; but when the grand united movement began in its last triumphant march, he felt that he was misplaced, forgotten, passed by, and well nigh trampled under the hurrying feet of those who had the key to every signal, who were in the secret of each preconcerted step. To him no duty was allotted—for him no *opening* seemed left even by chance. In the universal

peal of a nation's mighty voice, there was no sound from him—no syllable for him. All the dreams of ambition—all the fervours of his rabid patriotism were counted but as unhealthy vapours, and he was left out, and almost alone, when the victorious freemen of England went up to receive the right which they had claimed, and to possess the land which they had won with all but bloodless conquest.

CHAPTER VI.

PELO DE SE.

CHARLES'S sense of his desolation was most complete. His mad rage sought for a present victim; but finding only the smiles, and cheers, and joyous greetings of a liberated people, there was none, not even his old enemy Malkin, nor his ~~new~~ friend, Drake, who could be chosen for the indulgence of his vengeance. So his mad rage turned in upon his own heart, and nestled foully there. The first serious effect of this self-devouring rage was the abandonment of himself to the company of those who had swarmed around him, offering till then scarcely heeded flattery, but who were precisely the men to take advantage of a well-to-do juvenile, with plenty of money, and a regular fit of the spleen. He openly insulted his warm-hearted, and (for aught he knew) unoffending friend, Mr. Drake, and took himself, with his hurt pride, to the circle of the vicious and ruined, with whom his feelings, though neither his taste nor his character, induced him to sympathise. The excited state of all parties, and his avowed interest in the plans and labours of the metropolitan clubs—the absorbing nature of the great national conflict—the rallying effects of all these things on his own spirit and bodily health, found a sufficient excuse to the lonely Sarah for his continued absence from home. She could not then go to him for a particular reason, which there was no particular reason to mention to him, though surely, at that time, we may hope, *had* he been aware of it, he would have deemed it quite reason enough why he should be near his wife. Good old

fashioned Nathaniel did not see any particular impropriety in Charles rollicking a little in the metropolis, after the freshness of the honeymoon was over, even when (the Boothby, as he playfully called her) Mrs. Drake informed him of Sarah's condition, and volunteered a piece of her motherly mind about Mr. Charles and his unfeeling behaviour in staying away from his wife at such a time ; he only thought that the likeliest thing to do was to send his dear Boothby down into the country, and as he happened to require just then a little more liberty than was consistent with her notions of conjugal duties, and he fancied that Charles had hardly yet rubbed off his very natural vexation, this arrangement, he thought, and indeed said, would be the pleasantest for all parties. But he did not tell his young friend the secret which had been committed to him in the sacredness of nuptial confidence ; and for some reason never properly explained, the dear little wife thought proper to keep her own counsel (at any rate, for a short time), from him whom it most concerned. Whatever additional shade would thus have gathered round Charles's falling character, if knowing he had given no heed to his wife's double claim on his presence and tenderest love, we rejoice that it is not our duty to draw it. He was innocent of this, and his conduct was so unjustifiable otherwise, and so pitiable in its results, that we may well refrain from making him appear so heartless, and so criminally weak, as to have purposely kept away at this affecting season.

We have said that he openly insulted his benefactor, but we should also have said that Nathaniel forgave the insult on the spot, and forgot it on the morrow, attributing it to its true cause, sorrow and drunkenness. Charles knew well enough that he had nothing to fear from his faithful friend, and that he need not even apologize for the spiteful falsehood he had so shamefully uttered. But the mischief was done in his own feelings towards Nathaniel. He could not go up to him with the frankness of contrition, nor with the freedom of one who knew that he was forgiven the moment he had sinned.

He had lost self-respect. All that he had gone through previously, *though it was attributable so largely to his own*

folly and vanity, had left him self-respect, increased unhealthily till its true name was, as we have intimated, conceit ; but this wrong—the wrong he himself had done without provocation—without the shadow of an excuse,—this blow dealt by his own reckless hand, had laid low in the dust all confidence—all that remained of youth's generous candour. A youth trained as he had been is like a well-timbered ship with many anchors on board. It is not a little shock that will wreck it, and when it is rolling fearfully in the trough of the greedy sea, there is an anchor still to be thrown out—to save the vessel from drifting to its fate. But when self-respect and self-reliance have gone, all the securities which mere human wisdom can devise fail and sink at once. He was adrift now. How swiftly does destruction come at all times to the hapless victim, though others see it from afar ; but how lightning-like in strength and suddenness is the blow which fells the innocence and untested virtue of the home-bred youth.

CHAPTER VII.

A SHORT SERMON.

WE can look back in calm though sad review on the follies, and excesses as we deem them, into which Charles had already fallen. We can reason deftly on the weakening tendency of self-indulgence, illustrating it by a reference to his wine-bibbing, and his inability to sustain the very lightest disappointments—but let us endeavour to be very charitable, and we shall assuredly be the gainers in wisdom. Drinking was not the source and origin of the evils which fell upon this youth's life. Is it ever the actual cause of the too common lot of poverty, disgrace, disease, death, and spiritual ruin which this age has so greatly to deplore ? Yes, in some instances it would be safe, and nearer to the truth (which can never be absolutely shown) to say, drink is the cause, the *one master cause*, of this desolation which you see. But do *not* lay upon it a burden which in all fairness it must not be

supposed to merit. For if in vehement declamation you persuade men that drink is the universal operative cause of all, or nearly all, manner of temporal evils, as well as the most poisoned of the fiery darts which pierce and slay the soul—you will teach the abstainer a fatal lie—you will sing him to slumber when only one danger is past, and that the most palpable and the easiest to be shunned ; while a thousand others—call them, if you would be truthful, a thousand demons—lurk at every step even of the temperate life, waiting with yawning jaws to catch the prey which your exaggeration has made so easy. Far more consistent with the great body of observed facts would it be to say that drink is the earthly doom and punishment, the very hell of other sins. Like hell, it is sin in its continuance—sin developed—sin in its appropriate atmosphere—and thus sin punished. There is no other fact in terrene life which so awfully exhibits the true nature of sin, or foreshadows the terrible curses of perdition, as this of the prevalence of drinking habits. Why what must that thing be ?—Sin—for which the only Divine remedy is the death of Christ, and the most generally adopted human remedy or counter-irritant, delirium tremens ? Does sorrow lead men to drink ? Granted for a moment. Does pain lead the lost to blaspheme God and curse each other and themselves most of all ? Suppose it, or believe it—in either case we can see only a hell—only the judicial and natural abandonment of a sinner to sin. What is so near to our conception of sin being its own punishment, as that of a man who is so weak, so infatuated, so bereft of sense, so abandoned of all good angels and of God, that he takes to drink—swallows for an unquenchable thirst the unquenchable fire—to allay the soreness of the smart folds the scorpion close over the heart ? To get rid of some of the consequences of sin, to rush into the seventh hell, where all is sin—where all are sinners, and sinners without ceasing ? Let us not identify sin and drink, but taking a broad and patient survey of all we hear and see, let us rather judge, each one to his own confusion and humiliation, what is the real character and fruit of that sin which we bring ourselves to hold so lightly—*that thing called sin*—what is it ? What must it be when,

as only one amongst other necessary consequences of its introduction and reign amongst men, the use of intoxicating beverages has come to be general and almost universal—nay, this is but a glimpse of the frightful picture—only think what sin must be, when notwithstanding all that the life, and blood, and truth, and grace of Christ have done for some men, they are still found dabbling in the scattered pools of that burning lake from which their Lord died to save them—think of the almost hopeless ruin which sin has wrought in the conscience, the judgment, the common sense, the natural emotions of man's heart, when even the Christian dare in his monstrous madness ply the wine-cup in the very face of Heaven. See them do it, without a qualm, without trembling, and fainting, and expiring with the monstrosity of their crime and danger. Hear them parleying with the demon, trafficking with him, pleading his cause, becoming the mouth-pieces of his lying excuses to mankind. Cross-examine these lying witnesses, and you will find them honest, sincere, speaking their deadly falsehoods in the very spirit and power of truth, and with an unprotesting conscience. We say to one and all—look on the impudent and unrebuked tyranny of hell's chief falsehood, enthroned in the temple of Christ, desecrating every act of genuine worship, garbling every response, and spoiling every gift from within the veil. Look on the blood-bought Christian, still so far the victim and the slave of sin that he actually believes he is doing no wrong, offering no insult to the tears, and sweat, and blood of his Redeemer, by laughing, and joking, and dallying, and making sport or affecting to derive his pleasure from the flames in which unredeemed souls are wailing and howling at the very sanctuary door. Oh, what ruin hath sin wrought in the noble nature of man, that not only in his fallen, hopeless doomed state, but also, and still in the peace, freedom, and all-sufficient wisdom of his regenerate state, he should be found resting content with the idea that he shall escape external torments hereafter, and may safely and consistently take to his bosom the live coals of a hell which he sees to be indeed a hell in the case of others. That he should touch the accursed thing and not instantly sink into the hell of for ever,

is a wonderful stretch even of Divine compassion. That he should put the very emblem of sin, and death, and hell to his lips, and not fall dead with remorse and horror at the sacrilege, shows what an omnipotence to curse resides in sin, when even the omnipotence of Grace is so imperceptibly slow, and reads to all men a fearful warning, not on the idle because self-evident theme of the sinfulness of drink, but on the exceeding sinfulness of sin itself, and the horrid probable reality of that hell in which sin, so mischievous, so appalling even here, under Divine restraints, shall be left all to itself. If a man ceases to reverence purity in his innermost thoughts, he has already fallen into sin. The open addiction to lewdness, with its attendant disgrace, its frequent criminal charges, its still more frequent accompaniment of disease and agonized life, are in themselves fearful evils ; but let us never forget that they are symptoms and consequences of sin. In the same way while we most earnestly contend for the vile sinfulness of drinking, let us mourn over and curse it as one of the most common and most terrible of the earthly punishments of sin already committed. If we do so, we shall not be content with repenting of the one sin without seriously protesting against all sin ; we shall put to silence the ignorance of foolish men who argue that the efforts to promote abstinence intrude upon the province or derogate from the dignity of the Gospel—for we shall present the rescued drunkard as one who having tasted, in pain and infamy, the bitterness of death, is now desirous of obtaining a victory over that very death which has made such havoc already with his peace and glory.

CHAPTER VIII.

PHILOSOPHY IN PARABLES.

CHARLES BARTON, then, cannot be described as owing all his troubles to the habit of drinking, but, through that habit, to the hurtful sway of sin in his mind ; neither, on the other hand, *can it be said* that he was driven to drinking to drown

his vexation and grief. It is much nearer the truth to say that the habit of taking stimulants rendered him unhealthily sensitive to troubles which sober men brush away as they would dust or flies, and weakened his moral nature, until he had no manly power to endure even a lot below the average of human tribulation.

Perhaps it would be well in this place to pause a little longer, for the purpose of rectifying modes of speech which are not generally believed to be correct, indeed, by those who use them, but are, nevertheless, calculated to do mischief to inexperienced youth. The expression, "He drank to drown his sorrow," certainly looks as if it were intended to convey an established truth—as if it took for granted that drinking would have this desirable effect. It is to be feared that in the actual crisis of affliction, when human judgments are by no means in a sane state, this idea, which would be ridiculed at any other time, does present itself with fatal force. But what is the amount of truth actually in this statement? There are two ways of dealing with trouble: one is getting over it, the other sinking under it. Whatever the trouble be, it is simply so much loss. In its nature it is the same thing as the loss of a walking-stick, which, when once lost, a man either replaces or learns to do without. Some losses are in their nature irreparable, though many of these, even, may be partially repaired by substitutes; but all losses are either remediable or endurable. If there be a remedy, the quickest way of dealing with the trouble is to get the remedy; if there be none, the best plan is to get used to the deprivation as fast as possible. In one of these two ways alone is it possible to do what is meant by the words, "forgetting his sorrow." A man may for a short time, or even for ever (as in the case of lunacy), forget the fact which has occasioned his sorrow; but when he is indulging in his sorrow, as it is called, does it mean that he is perpetually reverting to or distinctly conscious of that fact? Certainly not: neither does he forget his grief, even though he should not, at the moment, be thinking of the fact which gave it existence. *Through the long hours of business, the happy husband never once recurs to the fact that he has a wife. Does he then forget his happiness? Does it not, on the contrary, shed a*

ht on the dry figures, and fusty merchandise, and scowling
 ditors with which he is all day absorbed? And when he
 s lost her, he does not recur to the time, or to the manner,
 even to the fact that many days ago he lost her: but does
 forget that grief; does it not show its presence at all
 nes, in every action, in the hue of each thought, and the
 ie of each word? And if, at any moment, he should be
 allenged as to his melancholy, would he not say, "Ah,
 end! you see I cannot yet forget my heavy grief—you see
 w strong is its hold upon me, even in this absorbing busi-
 ss." Now, turn to the drunkard: does he drink his grief
 ay? Ask him, and he will tell you (for, strange as it may
 ind, drunkards are very honest men in matters which less
 praved men would make a virtue of concealing, for indeed
 ey glory in their shame—sad case!), "I am drinking because
 r grief is heavy and always with me; drink enables me to
 le it from others. But why I should try so to hide it I
 not know—I don't care about their knowing it; but the
 om, the trail of the storm-cloud is still on me, is still with
 ; it lowers on me more and more, and in my most hilarious
 ments I feel the mouldy gust—I see the skeleton. In my
 unken stupor I live again, with far more distress than at
 st, the scenes and emotions of the dreadful trial. Do I
 get my sorrow and my loss? O no! See my trembling
 nd—my staring, blood-shot eye—my haggard, wasted coun-
 nance—my shrivelled, shaken frame; hear me shriek in
 a deep slumber which fools dare to envy me. Do I forget
 r grief? See me still drink—drink madly! See me cast
 hope, all effort, all courage, all strength to the winds—then
 k me if, 'in drink,' I have drowned my grief? They told
 it would—the liars! I fancied it might—fool that I was!
 ound that it lulled me a little at the first—mingled a few
 sting gleams with the cloud that was murky and so threaten-
 g. I went on with it—it has triumphed already; for it
 ngs, with fiendish malice, my loss to view—distorted, ex-
 agerated, redoubled in its power to depress and pain me;
 d the very drink which has stupefied my outward senses
 its me up all alone with the fiend, and there is no escape.
 know *all the while* it is a dream; but dreams are a thousand-
 l brighter or more terrible than waking reality; and the

dream of drunkenness—alas ! it enthrals me, it chains me to the sepulchre door, it glazes and glues my eyes—they will not shut ; it stiffens my neck—it will not turn ; and the worse than reality is thrust upon me by the very stupefaction by which I sought to cover my head from a sight which I thought too terrible to bear.”

It should not be necessary to pursue this palpable delusion any further ; but when we consider how greatly the mind is often unhinged by the strokes of affliction, we are sensible of the dangerous fascination of this murderous lie. Let us then seek illustration of its falsity in two out of many cases that occur to the mind. A man is suddenly overwhelmed by calamity in his trade. Bankruptcy is inevitable. He must appear to the world for a short time as he really is—a poor man, if not dishonest. To a proud nature accustomed to the esteem of the public, there can hardly be a heavier grief than this. How is it to be dealt with—what is the exact demand arising out of these disastrous circumstances ? We may answer, for convenience—the thing is to forget the grief in the best and quickest way possible. The fact of having been a bankrupt can never be purged from the memory, so that the only way in which the grief can be drowned is by lowering all desire and habits and ambition to the new level, or else making the fact itself a new starting point, a continual example of warning and caution—a ground for an entire change of system in doing business, or a memorandum against those particular temptations which were too dazzling to resist the first time, but which afterwards, whenever they do present themselves, will only serve as occasions for reference to the old black fact of bankruptcy, a reference that will at once disclose their real character, and thus save the victim from further imposition. Take an instance out of the many thousands of bankruptcies that occur every year—drop on some smiling, busy, short-timed citizen who bolts and bounces for a few minutes in and out of his counting-house, to and from the Exchange, then rolls back again exultant in the merchant's express to Brighton and dinner. Hold him by the button if you only can—ask him to what circumstance *mainly* he attributes that regular prosperity which swells his

ody, clears his intellect, whets his daily appetite, and polishes his face with the oil of joy—he will answer with rude andour, “Why to tell you the truth it was that little mess of mine in ’47. I’ve never looked behind me since except to remember the warning I got then, with a vengeance.” You say, truly, that man has forgotten his shame and grief—but has he forgotten the blow which shattered all the hopes and toil of years in a night? No; he remembers it well, but only with pleasure. The grief has been put to the rout, and one of the best facts in his whole history appears before him no longer in rags, and sores, and tears, but in the very garb of an angel. His good sense, and docility, and manly submission to the blow have created good out of evil. He has drowned his grief in a flood of prosperity, the only death by which such grief could die.

Look again on that crowded platform, and you will see Smith leaning against a post, or nudged and buffeted by glossy men who look suspiciously to their luggage, or their little hamper of fish as it passes him more particularly. See him as his dull eye twinkles spitefully on the fortunate passengers by the first train, all first-class. *He* must wait—he has been to look at the dismal den, which is to take him and his rotten carpet-bag all the way to Croydon, and he knows very well that by the time he gets there, shivering and hungry, these sleek, purse-proud aristocrats will be tossing their bumpers of good wine down their white-chokered throats, and smoothing their snow-white napkins complacently through their detestable, silky, guinea-stained hands. He knows all about it—you can see at a glance a whole history of miserable folly in the slouching gait and seedy shocking hat. Just get him by the button, if he has one, or if not, better not be so familiar, perhaps, all things considered, and ask him—“Friend, you seem to have seen better days—express days, if I may so say—will you tell me to what you attribute your misfortunes?”

“Oh, certainly—everybody knows all about it: it was that cursed mess I made in the bad year ’47. I never looked up again—it was no use trying, you see—if your foot slips in the race it’s all over with you—plenty at your heels quite as good as yourself; *it’s no good from that moment—at least I found*

it so. I've been trying my hand at all sorts of things, for an honest living, but luck's against me all along ; now I've got a little in the stationery line—let me sell you a steel pen, sir—it's made by Gillott you see, sir, but it hasn't his name on, because they think the trade's a low one for such as they—try a box, sir ? ”

You are fairly in for it—you cannot help buying the article—and if you are not of a very firm mind, you will be saddled with the old carpet-bag too. But not satisfied quite, you presume on the purchase to ask a few more questions, which both of you would, perhaps, think rather impudent but for the steel-pen transaction, and you find that this gentleman took to drinking in his trouble.

“ Well, did you find any relief ? ”

“ Lord bless you, what a question ! Of course not, it only made things worse.”

“ Yes—yes, I understand all that—it ran away with what little respectability, money, and health you had left you—but what I want to know is—did it lessen your vexation and grief ? ”

“ Well, you are a queer chap, and no mistake—you are—excuse me, but of course it didn't ; it played old Harry with me every way. I never knew what poverty was till then. Did you ever go of a morning, sir, to your old spot, trembling and cold, and sick all over, to get a glass of gin, and hear the old cantankerous she-devil growl out—‘ Not a drop till he's paid his chalk ’—not a penny in your pocket—eh, did you ever try it on ? No ? Well then you never knew what it is to be poor ? Good God ! if I had been worth as much as all the lot of them first-class swells, I'd have given it, and gladly, for a noggin of gin. Of course it made me feel my grief more than ever—it was as bad as twins—it was like a new mouth to feed when there was less to feed with, and so it couldn't well help coming home close to me, and making me feel sore at my loss ; then at night when I rolled on the floor, because I had no bed to roll into, and couldn't either stand or keep awake, I could not speak nor move ; but could hear our Susan sighing, and saying—‘ Poor devil—never mind, he'll rest from his trouble a bit.’ Good soul she was, but she

little knew then, and I daren't tell her; you see, I should have lost my only excuse if I had—but I never did for a moment forget my grief. At first I was racing up and down the column of my ledger, always finding the sum on one side less and less every time I counted, and the other growing so big there wasn't room in the breadth of the page to put all the figures, then running for my life, breaking my shins, tumbling into holes, crawling into sewers to get out of the way, but the burn had always a hold of my leg, do what I would—then the prison, colder and darker than the real one—more blasphemy, more cruel jokes, and less gin than the real one—then the court, every night over again, and every night the judge scowled at me, and the people hissed me worse and worse as if I'd done a fresh bankruptcy every day. But there's my train, and they're shutting the doors—thank you, sir, good day—and when misfortune does come, don't double it, and give it a life settlement in your property, and your heart too, by drinking to drive it away."

There are some people who have, or pretend to have, a secret pleasure in nursing their griefs. We fancy such griefs are very puny things to begin with, and will stand a good deal of humouring. But griefs, be they small or great, are of themselves like most sorts of pleasure in one respect, they don't last long; they are evanescent. Now, if people like grief, and there is any way of making it permanent, it is a pity they should not know it. Shall we tell them how they can give a living zest to their sorrow—make it incessant and immortal—convert it from a child's play and sham, into a real fire-and-blood tragedy? Drink—drink under the pretence, or under the genuine expectation, that thereby you will get rid of your little trouble, and we will warrant you that in a short time you will not know your old trouble; it will grow to a gigantic monster; it will hang about you like a shadow—greater and blacker as the day of life goes down. Or, take for further illustration, the case of an unhappy conscience. Let the sore wound in the remembrance be the result of undiscovered crime or shameful vice. In either case there is a fear of discovery and of consequences, in addition to the *annoying and degrading* presence of the *unalterable fact*.

Will not drink prove a cordial? What! for a wounded conscience? Will it help to conceal the fault from others? Will it drive out the demon from the heart? Try it. Ply the tempting draught—the nectar spiced with the blest aroma of healing and peace. By all means try it. But be sure of what you are about to do. There are other ways of getting rid of these nightmares of the broad staring day, but they are unpleasant as they are effectual. Confess your crime, surrender to justice, and you will then, at least, be free from apprehension, and remorse will have its keen tooth-edge blunted by your submission to such punishment as the law appoints for your misdeed. Or is it vice that has left its sting behind; disloyalty to vows, and a lie lived evermore beneath the paining glance of genial and trusting love? Vice worse a thousand times than crime; worse in its effects upon society; all the worse because society has no protection and no revenge; all the worse to bear about in the memory, because no punishment of man's contrivance is deemed heavy enough to meet the case, and the guilty one is left perforce to God.

The relief proposed is certainly more congenial to this kind of sorrow than to any other; it is precisely the kind of relief which sin would lead a man to seek, because so has God made the universal system, that sin leads surely, more or less directly, to its own punishment. It is quite a matter of course that a spirit chafed and wasted by the indwelling of secret sin should be led by that burning pain to the most violent of all plausible means of assuagement, and the Nemesis of sin is nowhere on earth seen in so terrible a form as when it leads its victim to the intoxicating cup. To begin with. All men who strive to put a charitable interpretation on your wild folly suspect you forthwith; so that, as far as disgrace is a consequence of your secret sin, it is a secret no longer; the punishment you dreaded from afar is upon you.

Every dram you sip is as bad as the admission of a new confidante to your painful secret—lessens the chances in your favour—renders it continually more and more hopeless for you to preserve your seeming innocence. Then, again, in your own thoughts, when will there be an end to the frightful

accusation? In sickness—in racking pain—in the reeling quailing weakness of body and mind—where will you find a pause in the ceaseless cry—“See what that sin hath brought about!” It is fit that you should thus suffer; neither you nor others can impugn the awful justice of that law by which sin, leading ever to fresh sin, becomes its own tormentor. Is there no mercy then, you ask, for that irrevocable sin? Perhaps there is. That is beside our present question. You have sinned. The sin is a fierce venomous worm, turning upon and gnawing the heart that sheltered its young brood. The wise and sober man looks out upon you in your ghastly merri-ment, or in your hell-boding stupor, as Lazarus may look from heaven to the pit where Dives dies again for ever. “Whatever others may have done,” say they, “there can be no doubt here; this man has sinned, and he is now in hell. Shun him, for he bears the mark of the sin-curse on his brow, and he raves in the fell frenzy which his sin has brought down upon his brain.” There may be pity mingling with the inevitable contempt; there may arise a compassionate prayer in the gazer’s heart; but there is nothing in the revolting spectacle itself to beget such pity. It can only be begotten by a humble remembrance that, in their own experience, even for sin as great, though, perhaps, not so greatly punished, there was mercy, and forgiveness, and a true balm of healing somewhere. Oh, guilty one! will you dare the lethargy and transient death which drink would seem to give? Then know, beforehand, that in that helpless utter sleep, when those who watch believe that you are really gone to the punishment you have deserved, they are not wrong in their fear.

You have heard and read of hell, and its dark outline in the dim regions of eternity has filled you with irrepressible dread—vague meaningless dread. You could not form a notion of what punishment can become; you never could have believed that the scorching figures of Scripture were feeble comparisons of the possible fact. But you believe it now. Good God! beneath that hushed and corpse-like clay, what a flood of agony hath burst forth from undreamed-of deeps in hell! Did ever hideous sick fancy people a moment with such cruel, *unrelenting, irresistible, malignant* demons, as those which

now crowd the hours of night-long sleep. Could anything of earth,—could a violent and shameful death in the sight of cursing and exulting multitudes,—could hell itself be worse than this? The cry will burst from your lips—"God, that I might never sleep again!" And whether he hears that cry or not, it will be answered. Drink on, thou possessed of many devils! Drink on, till, in the very laughing sunlight of high summer time, in the gay scenes of wealth's rejoicing festival, the images of that fell sleep shall start out upon you—hound you on to more than madness—show you the stain upon your hand in the broad day, which you never looked at, save in the lamplight—mock your agony, as you cry, "Out, damned spot!" come near and gaze with fiery eyeballs into your very soul; press round you as if to strike or suffocate you; then tear your secret from your yet beating, smoking heart. Then will you cry, with louder voice—"God! that I might sleep—sleep for an hour—sleep to wake no more, or to awake in hell, and know that all was past, and all resistance vain! Then might all hope die—all thoughts of mercy cease, and the keenest torture of hell be stilled, by drawing close the cloud through which I saw the Lazarus in glory, and shutting me up from that cruel mockery."

Does drink drown grief? No. It is the death-pregnant swamp in which the slight sore is inflamed; the small ailment suddenly ripened into rank fever—the plaintive sigh swollen to the angry howlings of delirium. Away with the falsehood. None believe it. All who have dared the remedy will tell you, even while they continue to use it, that not one moment's peace has it ever given them, no matter how much or little they have tried it; no matter what their sorrow.

Some few men, yielding to the pressure of their shame, leap the gulf, and we call them suicides, and even you would call them fools to add of their fair sweet earthly life so many years to the greedy hell. But you? You bring that hell here—all the more horrible to you from its dismal contrast to the hopes which hang like fruits of healing on every branch of the Tree of Life. You bring into the fair garden of God's mercy, from which in old time, he that hath the keys, thrust forth Satan yelling, the demons of perdition to enact their

bscene revels before our very eyes, in the open and refreshing day of grace. Arise, and curse them in the name they war, back to the hell, where, if you will, you may meet them gain. But do not give your strength and gladness of a few right safe years to the greedy fires which leap forth at your invitation to lick and blast your soul.

Of Charles, then, it may be said that the disappointment and disgust which he had just experienced were, in some sense, the external causes of his lapse into the worse forms of that vice which is less able to disguise its true character than any other ; for, as it both lowers a man in his own esteem, and stimulates him to seek for some one's esteem in lieu of his own, it sets him at once in his right position. It's as true as the barometer. Few ever trouble themselves to look in at the back-door to see whereabouts the mercury is. They know well enough by the index at a glance. So is it with drinking ; it shows whereabouts in the scale a man is. Mark the manner, the quantities, the company, the times and seasons in which he drinks, and though you cannot tell how long he has been a drunkard, you can tell precisely how low the entire man is degraded.

CHAPTER IX.

UNPLEASANT ANXIETY.

NATHANIEL sat in his den—alone and deeply pondering. He made no sign. No sign, we should say, by which the wistful eye at the keyhole could discover the object, the nature or the extent of that emotion which had half an hour before swept like a tornado through the region of the outer office. There was a conscience far-from void of offence behind that wistful eye ; hence its steady application to the keyhole regardless of the draught and at the risk of inflammation. But there was no satisfactory information, either one way or the other, as to whether the gazer in question was involved in that stern meditation. It might, or it might not be, that the sense of *propriety* which so eminently characterized the prin-

principal of that establishment had received a violent shock from an anonymous letter on the subject of a certain uproarious supper, at which, on the preceding evening, the sly scapegrace behind the door had assisted to the due celebration of his birth, and the greatest possible detriment to his life. Nathaniel, then, made no sign that was not liable to very conflicting interpretations ; for his humour, whatever it might have for its object or cause, vented itself for full quarter of an hour in splitting a whole bundle of quills to tatters, and chewing yards of tape up into a ball too big to swallow, and almost too dry and too large to get rid of by the way through which it had entered.

There certainly was some extraordinary cause for all this absence of mind, and all these peevish displays of temper ; it certainly was not a matter of regular business, for Mr. Drake's favourite method of dealing with a fractious client was by the issuing of brief epistles by the score, every one of which ought to have answered all the purposes of severity, seeing that the charge was 3*s.* 4*d.*, and no abatement for quantity ; nor was it very likely that his ill-humour arose in connection with the peccadilloes of his clerk, which would have called forth contempt and contempt only so long as they did not interfere with the attention due to his affairs. Yet the emotion was so changeable, so fierce, so suggestive of what he could be and do, if once fairly roused, that the prurient curiosity of the keyhole became the means of a timely vow of reform, so terrible was the sight of that frowning visage in its wrath and grief. Notwithstanding all the physical efforts on the part of the much perplexed lawyer, his mind seemed incapable of forming any comforting decision on the subject that was irritating his present peace ; so he tried his old plan for the twentieth time that morning, now apparently with some slight success. He dived into his coat-tail pocket, as if he feared something would bite him therein, and convulsively extracted a very legal looking letter, only a little more crumpled and soiled than such documents usually are so long as they are in the hands of lawyers, and scrawled over both outside and inside in anything but a professional hand. This epistle he drew between his fingers, straightened on his knee, opened,

placed on his desk-stand, flattened still further, steadied with two leaded bear-paws of iron, one on each side ; then perused with an expression not unfamiliar to the countenance of the profession, which seemed to say—"If there is anything in you, I'll have it out of you as soon and as clean as another." The letter which thus underwent a thorough cross-examination (as cross as cross could be) was in itself an unoffending, harmless, letter ; indeed, it was substantially about as old-fashioned a piece of post-matrimonial fondness as ever crept up by capillary attraction into the very cockles of a conjugal heart. Mr. Drake was not to be called a sentimental man in a general way, and though in secret he doated on the Boothby, and in private often took an opportunity of telling her so, his general behaviour indicated a rather low appreciation of the great boon unintentionally bequeathed to him by his defunct client, so far as the personal worth of his wife was concerned. And yet he preserved this letter till it was almost illegible and terribly fringed at the edges ; so that we are able to present a copy of it here, and also to see—what for some time he could not see—how important, how urgent the crisis which was dimly foreshadowed in the postscript.

"DEAREST HONEY,—

"I'm sure, dearest, you'll be dying to know that your darling is safe, so I cannot rest till I write to tell you that I got all safe, and myself no worse for the journey last Saturday night but two. The coach was very full of a couple of Quakers, and a man on my side that chewed like a cow ; we were all so hot we wished each other all outside, or taken ill, and obliged to stop on the road. But, my word ! when we did pull up at the 'Blue Bottle,' wasn't I cramped with cold ! Everybody was expecting me—at least, they said as much—all but the carriage, which came half an hour after its time ; but then, as I said (for I didn't like to scold, you know), the coach was late ; so we got home, and Sarah was as glad to see me as if she'd never gone away at all. The house is most splendid ; not but what it looks older since I used to wonder at it, and wish—(ah ! never mind now, what I wished). Everything's new, except the old furniture and pictures—I mean, the servants are new, and as civil as needs be. (Shall I have to give 'em anything when I go away ? I should think so, by the looks of them.) Sarah looks—ahem—pale, but happy to see me. Don't ask any questions, for I sha'n't tell you if you do. Make yourself as happy as you can, and you can tell that scapegrace radical, that if he likes his politics better than his wife,

we know very well how to jog on without him. Mind, deary, and wrap up well, and don't shave so low down your chin; for this salty weather, people say, is very deceitful. I've nothing more to say, except dearest love from us both, especially me: and mind you wrap up; and come and fetch me as soon as you've been fairly tired a week or two of being alone, and send Charles home.

"Your loving Wife.

"P.S.—Sarah, I find, frets a good deal about Charles never writing. She doesn't mind his staying away a bit longer, if he's getting well, and that sort of thing; but she does think it a hard case he shouldn't write for more than three weeks; though, mind you, she doesn't say so. She doesn't want him to come home just yet, because Mr. Grogram (our man of business, you know,) says there's no end of ill feeling among the squires round about, for what Charles has done against them in getting the Reform Bill passed; they've sworn to have his life. Grogram says they're not so bad as they say, but he does think it would be better for all parties if Charles would stay away a bit, till the worst's blown over; and he thinks that Sarah ought to go to Charles, rather than Charles come to her; but then, if so, say I, what's the use of my coming down here? So you see, she takes it to heart a good deal, lovey, that Charles should never send her a word all this time. You're bad enough—only written once, I declare—but you're a long way better than he is, as good cause you should be, eh?"

And this was Mr. Nathaniel's reverie.—Confound the young tom-noddy, he's vexed with me; goodness knows why, but does he mean to play sulky with his wife; my pet Sarah, why what would the man be at? When I married I could hardly get heels down again for a twelvemonth, and then even she wasn't Sarah; what's possessed the lad to go and positively leave his wife without a word for ever so many weeks! And worse, perhaps, he may be dead; how will that sound in the papers. I'm glad I a'n't a coroner. "Found drowned," what a shock to Sarah's feelings it would be, even though he does half deserve it; perhaps in a sewer, too, "Found drowned with his throat cut." No, that wouldn't be it anyhow. There have I been ever since breakfast; why I haven't had a mouthful, trailing up and down after him. He surely has not turned vagabond; I think I see him as he goes into one of his own villages, staring up at a board with his own name at the bottom, threatening to take himself up for begging. Well, but where is he; and if I find him can I keep my temper? I've a mind to knock him down; there's nothing

it for bringing a ninnyhead to his senses ; argument down sweetly then, like physic through a funnel. Why isn't the fellow write to his bonny wife ? He was drunk when I saw him last ; perhaps he's gone on being drunk in a pig-hole or other—who's to know where he is ? I can't be troubling about in all the slums and dens to seek him. That greasy-faced waiter, too, didn't care a button what become of him. I thought I'd frighten him, and told him I believed he'd had foul play, and the rascal grinned like a fool, and said, "Werry likely." Good job he went off with a grin, or I'd have knocked his nose as flat as a—wafer. What's the good of looking for him ; he isn't worth looking for ; no one is who would leave his wife (and such a one) for weeks and weeks without a word."

This is a sample of the style in which the worthy man was perplexed ; and it was hard to tell whether indignation or despair had worked uppermost in his mind. It was a very unfortunate incident in his life ; for, as it happened to be a very rainy day, and he was still in his humours, he gave saucy and unsolicited advice to his clients, and as for the clerical gents in the street outside, they were all in such a state of perplexity, that the best thing they could do was to leave business at a standstill and twirl their thumbs in idle dismay. Towards evening a client came and knocked timidly at his sanctum door, and told him it was long past dinner-time, upon which, the spirit of indignation being yet strong upon him, he said—"Then it's my time, I don't want any," and reaching his hat down to him in a fit of abstraction, he thrust his hands in his pockets, and wandered out into the street like one dreaming. Whither he went he himself could never exactly tell. He wandered on with the purposeless air of one who had no business on earth and sought to avoid observation by choosing dark and little frequented streets. His mind had exhausted all conjecture ; he was completely at sea, and in his jaded state no wonder that he would conjure up painful fancies about the lad he had so dearly loved, and still more, far more painful images of that girl Sarah—as she would be when she came to know that her young husband had gone—perhaps for ever—perhaps perished—*perhaps even worse than that.* He found himself

in the street where a huge theatre frowned in sullen majesty on all the gay and giddy throng who were pressing in to its gorgeous saloons. He mingled with the crowd—was borne on unresisting—Charles might be there. He had been of late a frequent visitor, and the idea struck him that he might find him. At last he stood in the centre of the pit, scanned the boxes and the circles. He was not there. He gazed as well as he could through the dense masses of the pit; but no Charles was there, and he felt that to look for him in such a crowd was only a fool's errand. The hot air stifled him, and the very spectacle of such radiant joyousness made him sick at heart. He longed to be gone, and, amidst the buffetings, hisses, laughter, and angry curses, he worked his way, tunneling, to the open street. If ever he had entertained a plan of search, he was most assuredly untrammelled with it now, for he had clean forgotten it; and so in the misty night he trudged away, forlorn and weary, and so home. Wine and waking contended which should inflict the more appalling fancies on him. He felt, after a weary and profitless search, that he was fit for nothing but guzzling—where was that acuteness and readiness of resources which men spoke of! He reproached himself for not having set about it properly, called up in each smiling glass the dismal picture of his forsaken dear one—goaded himself to new resolves—went to his pillow to recommence the vain efforts of the day, and awoke to a sense of new fears and greater helplessness every morning.

CHAPTER X.

UNPLEASANT RELIEF.

ABOUT a week after his visit to the theatre, he was trying to eat some breakfast and to read 'the paper, with about the same progress in each duty, when a note was brought to him of a very unproposessing exterior, and so far filthy and unpleasantly odorous, that, apart from its contents, it would have effectually put a stop to the breakfast business if there had

been any previous disposition to proceed in that matter. He managed to unfold it without troubling himself about what it might contain, or who had sent it, but no sooner had he deciphered the contents than he rushed out of the room bawling out—"Stop that man—Henry Mary—Mr. Thicksell—here some of you who brought this note—fetch me my coat and boots—look alive I'm going out—don't know how long—can't say—Here you sir—anybody calls—I'm out—if business very particular wait if not never mind—" and away he rushed. The note was unsatisfactory in more respects than one—it was not very clear in its communication, and the amount of information conveyed was not very agreeable. Here it is :—

"HONORED SUR,—

"i rite to say as how on one night week afore last, me and another constable picked up a corpse in Smithfield Bars—Sundy was a fortnit—and tuk it to Bartlemy's Casalty ward; as we was agoin—he said to me—my name it is Barton—and a gent—don't say never a word to nobody bout me being drunk and my legs broke—nor don't tell nobody where I be—only tell or better rite Nathan Drake, of Cooper's Street, Bedford Place, that I'm all rite, and he's to say so to all as axes—and I'll turn up one o these days. So me and comrade swore we wouldn't tell a word—cos he gin us a soverin apiece—and so I rite you mayn't be oneasy accordingly, as the young gent he wished.

"In coorse my name's my own."

In a very short time Nathaniel presented himself at the lodge of that palatial refuge for the injured and sick poor, was directed to the Casualty Ward, and as he was passing down the steps the first person he met was the greasy-faced waiter, who was startled a little and blushed as much as a bronze complexion would admit of—"What the devil brings you here?" said the rude Nathaniel.

"Me, sir—you're uncommon kind, I'm sure—well, if you must know, sir, my dear little boy, one of many, sir, and the best of many, though I say it as p'raps shouldn't—is a learnin' to be a chimbley sweep—and yesterday morning before it was quite light, I'm told, he was a-top of a flue, and as boys will be boys, he was a making faces at another sweep a-top of a chimbley nex door, when his brush gave way, and trying to clutch hold of it, the little lamb fell right down a three

storey chimbley, sir—and was brought here all crooked up and smashed to a black jelly, as you would hardly know him, sir, again, if you see'd him."

This was not a bad lie, considering the circumstances—but there was such a culpable absence of what Mr. Drake conceived to be proper parental grief at such an event, that giving the man the benefit of that doubt, he merely said—

"You infernal liar—show me where Mr. Barton is, or I'll punch you to a black jelly, and you go and keep the chimney-sweep company."

"Mr. Barton, sir!—no, now you don't mean to say he's in here—good gracious!"

"You know well enough, you scoundrel—where is he?"

"Silence, if you please, gentlemen—can't have that noise on the stairs—go out, if you will quarrel—beg your pardon, sir,"—seeing Mr. Drake, and courtesying at least two-and-sixpence worth of good-breeding, the good decayed gentlewoman asked, what did he please to want?

"I want to see a patient here of the name of Charles Barton!"

"There's no such person here, sir; perhaps you've mistaken the ward—this is Casualty."

"Casualty's just what I want, my good woman—and Charles Barton I will see."

"I tell you there's never one of that name in here, and has not been these many weeks, I'll take my oath."

"What's that man doing here, then?"

"He—why I believe he has been to see a friend of his that's down in the dark-room, of the name of Drake—a shocking case—"

"Eh—Drake, did you say—what sort of a man—young, eh? you lying scamp!—what do you mean standing grinning that way for—do you think I really believed your cock-and-bull story—who do you take me for—do I look like believing it—who did you come to see?—out with it."

The alarmed father of the fictitious sweep relented at once, repented there and then, and beseeching pardon, said he would tell the truth:—

"You see, Mr. Drake, our friend has got into a mess, as one

may say, and a very bad mess it is—and so he said his name was Drake, and he sent for me and said I was the only friend he had in the world ; in fact, we always did take to each other a good deal from the very first—we were made for each other, and so I came and brought him some linen—it isn't very first-rate, sir, but when I looked in his portmanteau there was hardly anything in it, so I brought him some of master's old things—which, Ma'am, I make so bold as beg you'll take care of, as they isn't mine, and I'm very particular."

The mischief was partly out now, and with a heavy heart Nathaniel followed the duenna-like nurse into the long clean dormitory—

"There," she said, "was where he did lie when first brought in, but he howled so dreadful we were obliged to move him—"

"And what do you say was the matter with him—couldn't they set his leg—he would give over howling then, I suppose ?"

"Why, sir, perhaps you're a friend of his—not his father, I should think—but he might not like you to know, poor man ; but truth is, he had the trembles dreadful—as bad as ever I saw a man to get over it—and we had to move him in there"—pointing to a dungeon-like door—"he was more than me and another could manage, so we got the young gentlemen to put the waistcoat on him, and he's been in that dark-room almost ever since he came in, but he's nearly better now, all but his leg—will you go in, sir ?"

"Good heavens !—I don't think I dare—surely you must be making it worse than it was—does a broken leg often bring on the trembles, as you call them ?"

"Not as ever I heard on—it's mostly drink ; but then you see I'm only a nurse, so I can't speak for certain. Will you go in, sir ?"

"Yes !" And the heavy bolt glided back softly, and the visitor stepped with heavy heart into that bare, high, cold, half-darkened, heavily-grated, and now silent cell. He drew near to the simple clean pallet on which Charles was lying, and in the dim light gazed with unspeakable tenderness on

the wan but flushed face of the sufferer. The nurse had forbidden speech almost entirely, but it needed no words to tell Nathaniel how much his friend had suffered; he inwardly forgave him again and again for the anxiety and toil he had caused him, as he bent over the listless form and saw the big tears glistening in the half-closed eyes. Few words were spoken.

"I knew you would find me, but I hoped and prayed you might not—has she told you? I am lame—I had been drunk for days—oh, never breathe it again—I fell down—I know not where, and I awoke to remembrance only to fancy I was in prison, and I thought I had murdered Sarah. I am better—but the doctors say I can hardly be moved just yet, even into a pleasanter room—what will you say to Sarah? I know you will tell her gently, and will not let her think of me as I really am."

"Trust me, my boy, she shall never know but that you have met with an accident. And are they kind to you here?"

"Kind? Yes, beyond everything—they think I'm poor—and still I know if I were to tell them I was rich, they could make no difference. To my latest day I will remember that I never knew how generous and noble men could be towards the poor and suffering until I lay sick in a Casualty ward."

The nurse appeared, like Fate; both felt her power, and with an eager clutched grasp of the hands, they took their farewell in silence.

BOOK VI.

A VAIN REPRIEVE.

"If I had a mind to be honest, I see fortune would not suffer me ; she drops booties into my mouth."

ATTOLYCUS.

Cas.—"It hath pleased the devil drunkenness, to give place to the devil wrath ; one unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself."

Iago.—"Come, you are too severe a moraler. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stand, I could heartily wish this had not befallen ; but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good."

Cas.—"I will ask him for my place again : he shall tell me I am a drunkard ! Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by-and-by a fool, and presently a beast ! O strange ! Every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredient is a devil."

OTHELLO.

York.—"How long shall I be patient ? Ah, how long
Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong ?"

RICHARD II.



Book Sixth.

A VAIN REPRIEVE.

CHAPTER I.

“A FINE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.”

SIR ETHELRED HARKYSIDE sat in *his* den. He belonged to that class of men to whom a den is not so much a matter of privilege or profession as a necessity—a painful and disgusting necessity. He seldom found his mind sufficiently subdued to enter this region of dullness and disorder, and when he was driven to entering it, he submitted with the grace of a bear who has returned to the bosom of his family after an unsuccessful search for grub ; and if his mind was in a subdued state, one required to be told as much, and even when assured of the fact, an impression prevailed that his mind was but loosely bottled up at the best, rather than effectually chastened.

Business was the dire necessity to which even the most confirmed indolence of downright dissipation was obliged occasionally to succumb. He was not cut out for business at all, as indeed his very name would suffice to show. His notions of good breeding were so high, so peculiarly high, that he would have greatly preferred to let it wholly alone—to relinquish it into the plebeian hands of Mr. Grogram, or the almost equally low-blooded hands of Lady H. But the latter was much of his own way of thinking, and endeavoured to *infuse* some of that much desired quality into *her blood which was* her one great lack, by pretensions to

refinements so difficult to maintain in any circumstances, that she retreated with unfeigned horror from all contact with the gross vulgarities of ways and means ; to her the end not only sanctified the means, but was the only sanctifying circumstance about the means, and the only subject of thought which ever found admission to her select circle of ideas. She would just as soon have thought of kissing the rector's old woman, as of admitting into her little elegant mental boudoir any notion whatever for which her sensitive conscience might reproach her as ungentle.

As for Mr. Grogram, the case was widely different, but the result was the same to some extent, for he did actually leave some business to his employer ; very little, it is true, and indeed about as little as well could be, to be any business at all. If Mr. Grogram had been a man to take advantage of his neighbour's weakness, he certainly had a *bond fide* opportunity in this quarter. But, then, happily for Mr. G.'s character, he did not more than half believe all that the old baronet said. There was a trifling measure of business which from time to time did necessitate at least the signature of Sir Ethelred ; and so the worthy land-manager made a virtue of necessity,—a sickly, untoward virtue, it must be confessed, but still to some extent a virtue, remarkable as being solitary. All men gazed in mute wonder at its brilliance, as devotees were wont to gaze at the kingly Koh-i-noor. But Mr. Jabez Grogram was not an incautious man ; *there was scarcely any amount of snare which his virtue could not resist, i.e., avoid.* If at any time he yielded to temptation, it was after careful sounding of all its boggy places, and in much assurance. We say he did not, happily for his immaculate reputation, more than half believe the nonchalance of this particular patron, and the reason for his incredulity was just simply that his average experience had been decidedly the other way—that even very rich and largely landed proprietors, and even inveterate absentees, were periodically very strict and wonderfully patient in their endeavours to discover that he had plundered them. He had in more than one instance presumed (but he was young then) on the seeming indifference of these men, and had been very nearly found out. The

warning was not lost. It laid a very powerful restraint on him; and his friends—that is, those who did not know him,—said he wanted encouraging.

On the whole, we should say his kind friends were labouring under some mistake; although, of a truth, the long-continued caution which he exercised in the matter of the Beetleskin property (Sir Ethelred's), notwithstanding the carelessness of the owner, might go far to warrant the assertion that he wanted confidence. The fact was, to an old stager like that, the affectation of indifference in this case was a little overdone—it did not sit easy on so rich a man; it was too gross and palpable; and he never felt the force of that great moral teaching which he actively promoted among the neighbouring peasantry—after the national school fashion of white boards and large emphatic letters,—“Beware of man-traps,” so keenly as when his deadly-lively patron flung the rent-book at his head, saying, “Confound your figures and flam, have it your own way, Grog.” But we have reason for believing that the steward was beginning to feel his way a little, was edging round to the belief that he could do (and with perfect safety) pretty nearly what he liked with this particular property, provided he applied unsparingly his profound knowledge of arithmetic to the confusion of each separate account. And the worthy man felt happy, was recovering his tone of mind; for, indeed, the conflict between fear and desire was wearing him out,—snares were his bug-bear, had been this many a day; but at length he was beginning to be of the mind of adventurous and enlightened boyhood, that “boards stuck on trees was all fudge.” Perhaps this returning confidence was attributable to the evident increase of his patron's irritability, and dislike to dry details about property, favourable or otherwise, and this again was attributable partly to increasing self-indulgence, and partly to a violent, because unprovoked, hatred to the next heir on the part of the present childless possessor of the Beetleskin estates.

The timid observer was brought to reason by reasoning thus, “If Harky ever did think of making a fool of me, he must, I should think, be pretty well satisfied in his own

mind that it won't do ; perhaps he thinks I *am* honest, and is really trusting while I think he's only trying me. Well, as to being honest—or at least as to his thinking me so—be that as it may, I should hardly think so, I know I don't look honest ; but at any rate, he knows by this time that as long as he watches there really will be nothing to find out ; and then you see he's got the way of watching without looking as if he was, perhaps he does not like to change—he'd be ashamed of himself to let out that he'd been playing the spy on a faithful old servant ; perhaps he can't change, or perhaps—but that is too good to be true—he never did suspect me. Anyhow it's a plain case, that so long as he has as much out of the estate as will float him through the voyage, he has no rational grounds for caring whether his agent be honest or not. Certainly, the last thing he would ever think of would be leaving wittingly a single rap behind him for anybody, especially the heir. So it will be safe to commence a graduated series of experiments ; and, bless my soul, it's about time, for he's getting very blue about the gills, short-necked, and a short man altogether, and, as one may say, a short life, statistically considered.

The graduated scale of experiments had been in operation several years, and was so very successful that the old caution had been entirely thrown aside, and the unchecked maw of the confidential plunderer was widening with practice, and constantly devouring something or other. This was to be expected, and, it will be said, was nobody's business but that of the two principals—the devourer and the devoured ; but then it fostered a bad general habit in the once scrupulous confidential agent—not intentionally, perhaps, but quite as systematically as though it had been on purpose. He became a schemer, constructed the most elaborate and immense machinery of humbug for the attainment of what were respectively very insignificant slices of other men's property, but which, when regarded collectively (and that was the light in which he viewed them), were worth something—anything—even the sacrifice of a conscience which, at the best of times, was more for show than use, and was hardly worth keeping clean, or indeed keeping at all. Even those very particular

gentlemen who balance accounts about once a week came, in no long time, to be considered by Mr. Jabez as fair game : he considered and calculated, until he became excited and bold by the very difficulty and danger of his approaches. Amongst other objects of his deepest interest as a moral sportsman was that half-fledged individual, Charles Barton. He soon discovered that he had a flat to deal with, and as his disposition towards self-enrichment had grown terribly of late years, he could not refrain from recompensing himself out of the simplicity of the son for the very unnecessary honour which had characterized his dealings with the sire. He was privy to those snares by which the young man was politically inveigled and done for ; and, upon Mr. Charles's sudden change from Toryism to very Radicalism, it had been his cue so to represent the change to the neighbouring gentry as greatly to exasperate them against the luckless Charles, and thereby make the place too hot to hold him. He had probably exaggerated the real danger in his representations to the young wife of his patron, but he did so honestly enough, for it was his daily concern to envenom all genteel sentiment thereabouts as much as possible against the renegade, and so to manage matters that, in a little time, his exaggerations would come to be a great deal less than the truth. It need scarcely be told how zealously he improved every opportunity in pursuance of this amiable plan, nor even how over zealously he laboured to create such opportunities when they did not spontaneously arise. Amongst many schemes of a similar character this one might be regarded as uppermost for the present, and he made no secret of anything except his real design ; that he chose very wisely to fold up, and put away into a corner of his own bosom.

On this morning, then, which was about six weeks, in point of time, from the date of the last chapter in the last book, Sir Ethelred Harkyside sat in his den. Mr. Grogram had not arrived—a circumstance all the more irritating, that it wanted full quarter of an hour of the appointed time, for the great man had despatched less breakfast than usual, in prospect of the *business* which was now to be despatched. Meanwhile, Sir Ethelred, like one in a furious but foolish

dream, unbundled the well-arranged documents before him, unfiled a huge army of little bills, unlocked many drawers by main force with the wrong keys, and did a variety of things that looked like, but was not business. He was, as Mr. Jabez well knew, a short man, and his neck the shortest part of his proportions. The lower part of his face was genuine Saxon clay, and bore signs of having been duly sodden after the good old Saxon custom, through a course of many generations. The sharp, restless eyes had just a thought of the savage in their shape and expression, though he was frequently assured by himself and others that they flashed with the true Norman blood; perhaps, however, they were slightly affected by a circumstance of which he was exceedingly proud, and had a closer connexion than was very apparent with that retreating forehead, which his family annals traced up to an early cross of the aboriginal British breed. He was a baronet of comparatively ancient standing. He inherited one of those unpurchasable (now-a-days) distinctions, which the discriminating head of the house of Stuart had been compelled to lavish from his royal fount of honour, simply on the ground that during his reign, and as a natural consequence of his beneficent and dignified rule, there was such an extraordinary flush of memorable and title-meriting men. Historically, then, the worthy gentleman in his den was retained for Toryism, and he often regretted the degradation of even Antereform times, since it had become actually not even worth his while to profess himself a Jacobite, and so to incur the suspicions of Government by the piety of his adhesion to an exiled and defunct royalty—which Government suspicion, by the way, must have been a remarkably pleasant kind of excitement, if history belies not the memories of many men who, destitute of common sense and of all political as well as religious principle, could have no other inducement to treason than the fun of the thing. Every night of his life he declared himself true to the backbone: what he meant 'twere hard to tell, unless he referred to woodcock, in which case there could be no dispute, as, in any case, there never was any one hardy enough or interested enough to ask him what he was true to. His tenour of conversation was highly con-

sistent, for he never yet found time to advance anything of a positive nature in the political line, and he applied the negative force of his character impartially to everything of every kind advanced by his compotators and compatriots. (Rather tautologous that.) He sat in his den, and his den soon gave symptoms of the presence of its presiding genius; for by the time Mr. Jabez screwed himself into the room all was in uproar, and the pudgy baronet was discovered, like Marius, sitting amid the ruins which himself had made, though the aspect was that of a demolished feather bed. The room, which generally looked and smelt like a pigstye, now looked not unlike that domestic institution after the first five minutes of a snow storm.

The pudgy little baronet put out his tongue lollingly, looked glum and tempestuous as his eye rested on the abashed and ghastly scrivener; but he knew he was in a quandary, and further that Mr. Grogram was punctual, so he thought better of it, gave silent orders internally for the tempest to keep quiet a bit, and held out his fist as if he were offering a mellow quince to his visitor—a round, sleek, crisp, crackling little fist, that reminded those who saw and felt it, rather unpleasantly of blown veal.

Into the details of that morning's business it would be alike unprofitable and impossible to enter. Two lines will dispatch it so far as we or Sir Ethelred are concerned. Mr. Grogram did the business, and the baronet made believe to overlook it, and in one sense he did overlook it, much to Mr. Jabez's content. When all was finished, to the great relief, on different accounts, of both parties, Mr. Grogram made as though he would go—or more correctly, made as though he did not want to go just yet, so Sir Ethelred gave over yawning, braced himself up to the task, and then—

"Any news stirring, Groggy?—of course not; there never is; so much the better."

"Why, yes, Sir Ethelred, there is; but it's nothing particular."

"Well, out with it man; do you want me to ask for it, because you know very well I won't; I don't care about it, *good morning.*"

"I beg pardon ; I'm sure, Sir Ethelred, I was only clearing my throat, and—"

"Go along man, do."

"It's only I thought you might like to know—at least I mean you would'nt be glad to hear, that your Radical friend's come home."

"What, Barton ? What do you mean by 'friend of mine' ? I've a good mind to—"

"Oh, Sir Ethelred, I meant ironically speaking, you see ; but I forgot you are one of the old school, and it's not to be expected that you should like irony ; your neighbour, Sir Ethelred, that's what I should have said, but I'm so thoughtless—"

"He's dared to show his face after all he's done ; at least, he hasn't gone so far as that yet ; he came home in the dark, posted all the way down, and, as I heard, stayed two hours on the road, for fear it shouldn't be dark enough when he got home, and no wonder ; it shows some good in the young man that he's ashamed to show himself all at once in these parts, after all said and done, drat him ; but he will do, you may be sure. I saw him early this morning, and even then he came with me nearly half way here ; but rely on me, Sir Ethelred, I gave him a piece of my mind, and your mind, and everybody's mind."

"Never mind everybody's mind, nor your own either, and as for mine, thank you ; but I can tell that myself in my own way—what else ?"

"Oh, nothing, only I gave him to understand that he might as well never have come back any more, if he was for a quiet life."

"Is he a Radical, then—really ?"

"Oh, Sir Ethelred, you wouldn't believe me if I was to tell you half what he said against the country party, and (I'm ashamed for listening to him, I am), more against you than anyone else."

"Damn the young puppy ; how dare he ! Does he mean hunting this fall—eh ? Does he ?"

"Well, now, I shouldn't think him so brazen as that comes to for all his Radicalism ; besides, no, I should say not ; he's

poorly, and well he may be, with such principles, and I for one can't pity him, choose how I try."

"You try ; and what should you try to pity him for ?"

"Only for his father's sake, sir, I assure you."

"His father's an old fool ; they're a rotten lot, stock and branch. If I didn't know better, I'd say they had no good blood in 'em ; and as it is, it's only second-rate—puddly blood. At least, I flatter myself—"

"Not at all, Sir Ethelred, you cannot flatter yourself in any respect, least of all in your blood, Sir **ETHELRED**." And as Mr. Grogram emphasized this name, both felt it was a settler.

"No, no, sir," he continued, "we that came over with William the Conqueror."

"We, *we*, indeed ! what do you mean, sir ? Eh ?"

"Unhappy me, forgive me, Sir Ethelred ; it's only a way of speaking we professional men get into ; you see we're so incessantly identifying our whole souls with the interests and feelings of our cli—, I mean our noble patrons, that we can't help saying *we*—"

"Besides," rejoined the baronet, "you know well enough that only half my blood came with the Conqueror."

"True, and that's my other excuse, Sir Ethelred."

"How excuse ?"

"For saying *we*, Sir Ethelred ; the fact is—, but of course you don't know it, I feel like you about good blood."

"You feel with me ; you wizened pig—eh ?" retorted the raging baronet ; but Grogram's blood was good of its kind, and though there was precious little of it, and that little mostly cool, it could get up, and it got up now. So he clenched his impertinent pretensions by replying, or rather continuing—

"Yes, Sir Ethelred, my family came over with William the Conqueror, on both sides."

"Merciful Heaven !" ejaculated the bursting little man of blood. "The man's daft ; you came over with William the Conqueror ? A Grogram, and Jabez, too, did *he* come ; the sea cook ? Why, you sheep-skin-faced jackanapes, you lie, to your face, and your face says you lie as plain as I do, and *your name, too, you Roundhead Puritan bastard ; how dare you tell me such a lie !*"

But Mr. Jabez, as we have said, not only could get his blood up, but he could not very well get it down again in a hurry, so he felt nettled and mischievous just then, and as sarcasm was his safest weapon in such contests, he blurted out at all hazards a very death-stab to the enraged baronet.

"Yes, Sir, we came over with the conqueror in Dutch bottoms, in Dutch boots, and with a decent stock of Dutch courage, and wasn't he William the Conqueror? you ought to know, some of you. We did your business, I rather guess, and James Stuart's, too."

This was the most violent and indeed the only explosion of the kind that ever broke from Grogam, volcano-like, right in a live baronet's face; but it had a most unexpected effect, and disastrous consequences to the speaker. Sir Ethelred stared as might a Nineveh bull on Layard's face, after a respectable interment of centuries in mounds, the very dust of which had once been a glorious city. He was not indignant nor yet exactly astonished—rather (as might have been the case with the aforesaid bull) as if some centuries ago he had been put into a mighty sepulchre of mouldy, loamy, old conceits, with that identical wide stare on his face ready for the first re-appearance of daylight above ground. If he had felt with anything like the keenness proper to one in his situation, he would have been choked on the spot, and all but the dowager's portion would have slid from the grasp of the parchment-faced cormorant, who stiffened as he stood with most becoming horror at his own presumption. But Sir Ethelred did not choke—did not feel as he ought to have felt—he simply stared, and that stare would have petrified the stiffened Grogam there and then, if he had known what it indicated. In truth Sir Ethelred did not know what he was staring so for himself; but in a few weeks more he knew why, for he declared with much solemnity, and a terrible amount of meaning, that his eyes were opened to Grogam's real character. And we cannot wonder at it, when we think how completely Mr. Jabez did open himself out on this occasion, and that it was the first time he had ever opened himself, even so wide as a peep-hole, to the bleared moral optics of Sir Ethelred Harkyside.

It appeared, all things considered, the wisest thing to go, and so the uncomfortable agent bowed as became a scion of Dutch conquerors, and sidled out of the room. The bewildered baronet continued to stare at the vacant spot for full five minutes until he came to his senses, and with a puffy growl muttered, "I believe that fellow's an infernal Whig."

The information of Mr. Jabez was perfectly correct, so far as the bare fact of Mr. Charles's arrival at Mylden Place was involved in his statement. It was true also that he had come to the house of his fathers very like an evilly disposed rogue in the night ; but the reason for this was rather a feeling of shame than of fear. He dreaded to meet the dear wife who, all ignorant of the real state of the case, was quietly rejoicing as she sat watching through the falling night—weeping freely as she remembered the pain through which her beloved one must have passed—weeping, too, that she had not been near to nurse his sickness ; but weeping most bitterly because she had dared to murmur in her own heart at his long silence. How wrong of her to have mistrusted his deep love. How bitter the punishment now to know that while she had fretted like a spoiled child, he had been tossing in wretched pain and fever alone (she felt so) in a great London hospital. He was coming now, and her tears were of joy more than of grief. How gently would she fold him to her beating heart. How tenderly would she strive to recompense him for the long lonely hours of anguish, and labour to bless and dignify the cruel stroke with the wise teachings of religious love. At length he came, the truant husband ; truant from such happiness and love as seldom cry to the worldling,—“Stay ! for home is heaven on earth.” His eye was sunk and dim, his cheek flushed for the first sweet moment, and then grew deathly pale ; his breath was sharp and difficult ; languor spread over all his limbs and features, and as he sank upon a couch outwearied and sick, the love of the wifely heart became charged with a new life of holiest pity, grew unspeakable—stronger than death. Many days passed in the unbroken bridal stillness of their earlier union. All emotions were indulged as if on sufferance, except the underlying love of both hearts which absorbed or held in silken

bondage all other feelings. It seemed as though the prodigal had brought more blessing than he had come, so needy and so feeble, to seek. Their cup of happiness was full—it was running over; ah, it was running away too. Let them drink it in haste, and offer up their praise-vows to God.

CHAPTER II.

A GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMAN.

MR. MOTTRAM had rejoined his master at a convenient spot on the way down—had met him, in fact, by appointment—very punctually, and very much to the satisfaction of both parties. Charles was thoroughly reformed, in intention, and Mr. Mottram had been somewhat reformed of necessity. But in reality, Charles was very much in need of some one to toady him up into something of his sadly-wasted self-respect—somebody, too, who did not know what he had really passed through; and who could both put a good face on the matter of the long absence, and teach him how to keep up appearances. He did not wish to play the hypocrite, and if there had been any likelihood of comforting Sarah's mind by a frank confession, there is no doubt, softened as he was, he would have given her that comfort at once—to rue his candour, perhaps, in a little time and evermore. Mr. Mottram had been called away from London at a very unfortunate crisis for his master—just when he had begun to find out that he was the object of silent contempt on the part of those bullying politicians who were the aversion of Mr. Mottram's respectable old soul. This gentleman had received the (to him) distressing intelligence that his only brother—a bachelor and a barber—had, in a fit of mental unsoundness (no one could question that—least of all the college-bred butler) deliberately chucked himself into a slimy canal, and had *persevered* in the mud till he was drowned. No pretence whatever existed for the act—no sign had ever been given by the lamented barber that he ever entertained such gloomy notions about self and destiny as to lead him to

drown himself. He had occasionally given very unpleasant hints about some such proceeding, but few supposed that he had the remotest reference to his own throat, when he said—"Go smoothly, sir? Thought so—sweetly? I thought so—beautiful—cut a man's jugular as clean as a whistle." Grave men recalled these grim utterances of their Sunday shaving, felt as if it was a punishment that might become a judgment for their profanity, were generally glad when the business was over—they recalled it for the guidance of the jury, and for the due horrifying of the public at the inquest—but one and all agreed they never did imagine that Solomon Mottram would of his own accord plunge even the tip of his tongue, much less his head and shoulders in cold water. He had done this very thing, however, and the jury, with a strong fellow-feeling could not bring themselves to any other conclusion than that he was out of his mind, and this accordingly was their unamended verdict. The tidings reached Mr. Mottram by a circuitous route, and before he received them the three burial clubs of which the deceased had been a member, concerted amongst themselves to give him a first-rate funeral, that should look as if it cost all the money due, and no balance were left wherewith disconsolate survivors might brave up against their sorrow. Melancholy tidings they were in every sense to the bereaved brother. He had once loved Solomon, but that was when he was a very little boy—much indebted to his elder. He saw at a glance that if there was any burying money at all, it would all be gone before he could handle it. It seemed to him that he must go down in the flesh to the West Riding of Yorkshire to settle the late hairdresser's affairs—it was very painful to a mind of his superior cast to do any such low thing. He little thought when he was at Oxford that he should ever be so hard driven as actually to go to Yorkshire in his own proper person. Couldn't he go by power of attorney? No, that would be madness—boring a hole in his own cheese, and setting the mouse to work—that would never do—go he must, but he never thought it. Then mainly, but momentarily the tidings shocked him, in that they made him for about the first time in *his life think of his own latter end*. But he went. He

was received with open arms and a closed shop. He soon opened the one and bound down the other with a clean print apron—setting to work like a man who knows how to make the best of a bad job. For the space of a month he shaved indefatigably, and by dint of his south country breed and college training, he secured such a popularity among the unshorn multitude, that they often sat to him twice a week instead of once as of old, for the sake of enjoying with something like a tittle his rich and humorous gabble.

His knowledge of perruquiere, acquired in a higher sphere, was a new power in the community—it so excited the wonder and taste of the window gazers, that they came inside by the dozen—consented to have their heads shaved, in the prospect of one day looking as curly and shiny about the poll as the wax-work miracles in the window—wearing with a meek spirit the while, the rustiest relics of by-gone wiggery which the old stock could furnish. Now all this was a delusion, and the worthy valet knew it. In the warmest corner of the little shavery there might be seen a lank, weak-eyed, light-haired young man, at all times of the day through those four experimental weeks, always intent on the same page of an old newspaper, and secretly engaged in making delusive estimates of how much the good-will of the business was worth. Mr. Mottram's devotion to business might be fully accounted for by a reference to this lank, weak-eyed, thin fact in the corner. And the upshot was that both parties were satisfied—Mr. Mottram especially making a splendid thing out of that deceptive prosperity—pocketing what he chose to call "a handsome, but not over handsome, benevolence"—handing over the business with its tare and tret at a price too much for net—breathing best wishes for the fortunate youth—who with clammy hands and unsavoury breath, and feeble, washy talk, contrived to shave all the customers once round—but not more than once all round. On the wings of success Mr. Mottram flew to the office of the night-coach to London—on the wings of £4 10s. he flew inside snugly to the metropolis, and at once followed the young master he had so loved—to plunder, with a zeal which bade fair to carry to *still* greater lengths the particular kind of love to which

alone his bosom granted a lodging. His account of his recent experiments in business was like sea-air to the sick youth—it put him in spirits, and considering how much he had gone through, and how much he might still have to go through, it did him a world of good. Once fairly within Mylden Place, Mr. Mottram felt at home, more so than his master, settled down as if for life; and, taking advantage of his young master's present penitence and wedded softness, he gave himself to unrestricted dissipation, much to the encouragement of the like mood in the familiar circle of the Hall. But he was, in many respects, a faithful and useful servant, particularly in the shrewdness with which he discovered in other people the very faults which were so actively developed in his own conduct. He was a rogue himself, and his master knew it as well as himself; but then a rogue has his uses, and may be depended on within known limits, while, again, it is generally safe to tolerate one who, from considerations of self, will not tolerate any other rogue in or about a house. Whether it was the result of instinct or culture, he had an excellent method for the detection of knavery, and frequently a very successful method. He took for granted that all persons who were necessarily trusted much were necessarily tempted much, and necessarily fell often. He knew human nature well: he had studied its workings as an art, and although he might occasionally make mistakes, he felt that he was master of the secret of human motive, and that was no small advantage. By indiscriminate suspicion it was surprising what a large number of doubtful actions turned up in their true light, whereby his suspicion grew apace, and his skill and success also grew apace. In addition to these invaluable qualities, he possessed great resources of a philosophic kind, by which he could imperceptibly mould and influence those who came into contact with him, none more so than his young master, for whom he conceived a very guardian-like affection, and for whose relief and pleasure he devised many clever plans. He made himself at home—not rudely, as the phrase implies, but quite naturally; for, as we have said, he felt himself quite at home, and had made up his mind to it. Not a word had Charles said to him by which he might have

concluded that drink had anything to do with his shaken health ; and yet, strange to say, he knew it. Was *that* instinct, or a matter of observation, and plain reasoning thereon ? And, stranger still, he deplored it, moralized often at odd times on the misfortune of not beginning young enough, and so getting seasoned. He had a feeling of resentment, too, against low liquors, to which, with genuine sorrow, he had noticed that his master was becoming addicted. The plan which, on this important point, appeared to his judgment the most desirable, was as follows : that Mr. Charles should begin gently, persevere steadily, and get worse as he found he could bear it ; that for the better discharge of these first duties he should be encouraged to take much fresh air, and as soon as the season fell in he should keep a stable, and hunt methodically five days out of seven. He was no judge of horseflesh himself, but a man with his brains and opportunities could scarcely have passed the meridian of life, and grown grey in the very best society, without picking up a complete vocabulary of jockey slang, and being able to look and talk wisely on all matters of sport. Sport was not to his taste, though game was : hunting was over arduous, but appetite was paradise. Besides, he was born, as one might say, with the idea that such rough exercise was at once a necessity and a glory to a thorough-bred gentleman. His fatherly interest in his young lord won the respect of servants and mistress—indeed, it gave a much-wanted air of antique grandeur to the entire family. Nearly all the really old branches of good families round about had a much older support in the shape of an aged domestic, who would have died, and, by all his own account, did very nearly die, some dozens of time for the safety of the young master and the honour of the house. The Barton establishment accordingly became at once solemnly splendid on the arrival of one so eminently fitted, outside and in, to play the venerable domestic.

Of course, the very idea of putting so much *that* was venerable into green plush breeches would have been profanity : he was dressed like a clergyman, had all the air of *the old school*, and one or two of their habits ; and of the two it would have looked much more proper to invest Mr.

Charles himself in his own livery. The slight prejudice which Sarah had conceived was soon dismissed from her amiable mind, with the mental remark, that she was sure she had no reason in the world for it, except that Mr. Mottram plainly did not approve of her. As that critic was now disposed to accept the settled fact as a settled fact, and behave as though he had done so, the sweet-tempered wife forgave him his prejudice and sank her own.

CHAPTER III.

UNSELFISH HAPPINESS.

ONE morning in the soft autumn time, Sarah was driving her husband a good long round, and their feeling was so intensely a happy one that it begat a desire in both minds to share it with others, and Sarah began to talk about having a little company at the Place—not stately dinner ordeals, nor yet roystering hunting breakfasts, but elegant and cozy parties: “For you know, Charles, I am so unspeakably happy that I think—indeed, I’m sure—I could make ever so many people happy; I’m half ashamed of being so happy, and nobody but mother knowing, though I don’t believe what she says, that a little variety will only give a relish to our joy—I don’t believe a word of it.” And she shook the reins friskily, jauntily, and the proud ponies stepped out in vigorous style.

Charles replied, with evident emotion, “I am too happy, love, to think of any change; I dare not propose such a thing, but I will gladly do all, anything you wish; I feel as if it were almost selfish to shut the whole world out from such joy as ours, for, without boasting, I think it is very rare, and I’m sure no change can change it; but I have a feeling as if we ought just now to ask my father and Mr. Drake; I should love, of all things, to see him handling a gun—wouldn’t it be fun? Then you know, love, if we don’t have them soon we can’t do with them by and by.”

“Of course we can’t: oh, I should be only too glad. I believe I *can’t* bear any more joy. But we will have both

papas, and we'll have them at once: do you think your papa will come? Would it be cruel to ask him? If we quarrelled and all that, I should not care; for he would say to himself, 'Ah! this is never my old home;' but as it is, dearest, don't you think it would make him heavy-hearted? As for dear Drake, I don't think he would come unless you said something about parchments and deeds. Have you any business that would tempt him? I feel sure he would make some dry excuse or other, if you proposed nothing but shooting, and offered him no inducement but his Boothby. Not that he doesn't love her; but then he's ashamed to show it—afraid she should take advantage of it, eh, Charles? Oh! he's a nonsuch is my dear old papa, second edition, bound in vellum."

"You shall write to Arlton and I to London, and we shall see who can beg most effectually. I've my own misgivings about both; but if they won't come and see our happiness, love, it shall be their own fault."

"Very well—now for rivalry and home (as she checked her ponies, and prepared to turn); if it comes to letter writing, I'm sure to beat you, Charles."

It was a simple-hearted, natural joke, but inadvertent; and it shot like an arrow into Charles's heart, where it held fast, quivering. Strange that so light a word should awaken suffering that had been hushed to slumber by such sweet lullabies of love. But it was an awakening—that suffering did but slumber; it was not healed, but only soothed and hidden. The old forlorn ambition was aroused, and very speedily there followed in its train the old discontent and restlessness. Charles had almost forgotten that his wife was above him, even in that unremitting diligence of love which for weeks had been his whole business and delight. Did she know it, too? He did not think that; it was pain enough that he knew it. He felt again, as he had so lately ceased to feel, that he was not worthy of her—that he had done nothing, could do nothing, was far from being in a way to do anything which would render her proud and glorious through her union with him. He began once more the dangerous play of fancy, which had already cost him so much.

His brain reeled, as vision after vision of imagined glory sped before him ; and he mourned, in the bitterness of a mortified but unhumbled pride, that he had not yet seized the glittering success he prized so highly, that he might make her like himself—proud in her love. There was no immediate and very marked indication of this mental relapse, but the quick eye discovered it, and in part attributed it to its true cause, so that she was all the more eloquent in her appeal to Mr. Barton to come, and see, and share their felicity, and even secretly, under cover of Mr. Drake's letter, added a rider of considerable pathos to Charles's colder invitation to the London father. All in vain : Mr. Drake pleaded term time, and gave unsatisfactory hints about Christmas ; Mr. Barton took time to consider, and Sarah felt that it was a drawn game—that neither she nor her husband would be declared winner ; if anything, that she had lost, for not having played fairly.

CHAPTER IV.

FEELING ONE'S WAY.

WHILE they were yet waiting for a reply from Arlton, Charles began to take rather more active exercise, and one morning he found himself booted and spurred and on horseback, with the design of riding to cover, just to see the hounds throw off. This was a very natural piece of business for a young man in Mr. Charles's position ; but, nevertheless, it was the result of a suggestion on the part of Mr. Mottram. That sagacious individual had only just arrived at the conviction that both he and his master might venture "to cover," at any rate. It had occurred to him before, but, apart from the weakness of his master, there were reasons for delay that had a reference to a weakness of his own. He early set himself to the establishment of his influence over the mind of the head groom, but he failed to derive confidence from the frequent assurances of that person to the effect that he was sure if ever there was a knowing one, it was himself (*Mottram*).

He did not feel thoroughly satisfied in his own mind that he had such an absolute command over this man's moral nature as to compel from him the simple truth in the matter of horse qualities—a matter of the last importance to one who intended some day or other to risk his neck, and was comparatively an unpractised rider. His doubts were by no means toned down by the circumstance, noted only by his own retentive memory, that the head groom had in turn recommended every animal on the premises as just the very ticket for one who liked a good article, and as quiet as milk. Up to the present time, then, it was impossible that Mr. Mottram could contemplate hunting with any peace of mind. But accident favoured, as it often will in the long run, one of his observant habits. He noticed that whenever the carriage was ordered out for a long drive (he could tell the length of the drive by the height of the horses, that was his way of guessing), Mullens was, or felt himself, at liberty to indulge the younger members of the coachman's family in a ride round the park, his motive being the promotion, not so much of his own happiness, or that of the youngsters, as of their aunt's, a remarkably delicate and timid lady, for whose love he was dying a very slow death.

It was a matter of record in Mr. Mottram's mind that Miss Julia was invariably mounted on that very grey cob of which Mullens had said as little good as he could find in his heart to say of any animal under his care; further, that this grey cob invariably bore its fair burden unshattered to the stable door, whole and sound, into the expectant arms of Mullens; whereas tamer looking and much smaller ponies not unfrequently went on short allowance for tricks abroad duly remembered against them. Like the prudent general that he was, he seized on the occasion, and without loss of time made that cob his own for use.

And so it came about that on this bright October morning Charles Barton found himself mounted, booted, and spurred, looking every inch the gentlemen, and turning upwards a very husbandly countenance to the fair pale face that peeped lovingly from behind the half-drawn curtain. Was there the glow of pride upon his face? Was there a

shadow on the fair brow above? No, it was only a morning cloud that sailed just then athwart the sunbeams. The faithful squire behaved like a lean Sancho Panza, and declared his satisfaction in confidential tones, "that he had a tit to be proud of, and he felt for his own part ready for anything." On their way to the meet, they had to pass along a narrow winding lane, in many parts hardly wide enough for one horseman, and nowhere very convenient for two abreast, for the out-grown brambles made havoc of Mottram's Oxford-mixture trowsers, and the rich berries left their dye on Charles's else unimpeachable white cords. As they were moving along at a good foot pace, and sustaining such conversation as could be squeezed in among the more urgent anxieties of the narrow bridle-road, they were both considerably startled by a tremendous noise, as of many frightened rooks cawing, and Mr. Mottram, catching hold of the pummel, managed to turn round as soon as he had got the grey cob to stand still, and announced as the result of his look-out, that "it was only Sir Ethelred with a coat on, the colour of his face."

"Why I thought the old gentleman was too fat to hunt."
("Ya aw hoick".)

"Perhaps he's only going to look on; he needn't cry out so, there's no hurry, and besides he can't pass just here."

But the wild cawing broke forth again, and ever nearer.

"Ya haw, hallo there, stand to one side, and keep quiet, mind you, till your betters push on—d'ye hear?"

He had by this time come as near as he could to be safe from any hind stroke which the grey cob might be prone to exhibiting, and yet there was no sign that the rider of the cob had any notion of his being a baronet of high degree, or of his being there at all.

"Cox—split the numscull, he's as deaf as timber."

"Hallo, you there, pudding-head, how's a gentleman to get past you?"

"Sorry I can't inform Sir Mufflehead—b'lieve that's your name, sir?"

"B'lieve your own business, you skinned sausage, and let me pass, or I'll—"

"Ay, do, you'd better, as you say, roll about a bit, for

you've got to grow a deal longer and thinner before you'll be able to do it ; roll on, you'll do it in time."

Charles was vastly amused, and, if the truth must be told, he was secretly pleased to see the towering pride of his neighbour and sometime friend brought low ; for Sir Ethelred had not only led him into vast and useless expenses, under a promise to bear a part which he had never redeemed, but he was one of those who (according to Grogan) had breathed the most free and fearful curses against the renegade. He knew well that the baronet's temper bordered often on ferocity ; but he had some grounds for believing that in the majority of instances it was infinitely more ludicrous than dangerous to anyone who had once met the storm ; and he half expected that his amusement would be heightened by the cowardice of his servant ; but Mr. Mottram had made himself perfectly acquainted with all that concerned the baronet, his rent-roll, his pedigree, his little failings, not forgetting his Cayenne temper and harmless bluster ; so the master was diverted by a conversational stand-up fight between his valet and his neighbour—both convicted cowards—both strong in point of words—and a well-matched pair for indomitable pride. It was a toss-up, in his opinion, whether Mot. would give way, or Sir Ethelred turn head at the imminent risk of being flung into the ditch over the hedge, from the irritating exposure of the horse fore and aft to the thorn and nettles of the straitened bridle-way. But the event was decided by an appeal from man to master, not very promising in its first attempt. Sir E. discerned some traces of gentility in the young man who was all the while sauntering on slightly in advance, and he said, in a conciliating tone, "Is that your master, fellow?" and then, with a start of recognition, he continued, "ah, poor fool, I see now, it's a pity you don't get a better ; you're not to blame for your scoundrelly impudence. I pity you from the bottom of my soul—as I do all low persons ; I pity your master, for he's a born idiot, and I imagine if you're his keeper, you've caught the complaint. Did you're master never teach you to respect blood, sir, good blood, old blood, and to know it when you see it?" (Pushing as if to pass.)

"It's likely I shall see a little, soon, and there won't be

much fear of mistake as to whose it is—bad or good ; but that would be a pity now you've mentioned the word ; don't you think so ? ”

“ Let me pass, you infernal scaramouch, will you ? ”

“ Now the murder's out ; there's no mistake about you being of a good old stock ; I could swear now your respected parents (many times removed) went in couples up and down cursing each other's eyes when the flood came.”

“ My ancestors, sir, were in the ark.”

“ Lord, now, that was a mercy ; do you think they swore as hard when they were fairly in ? ”

“ They didn't swear ; what makes you think so ? ”

“ Well, I never did hear right down hearty swearing till I went down to Yorkshire, and one of those pitmen came in to— —to transact business, and gracious mercy, but how he did curse ; there was nothing else ; I asked him what made him so black, and he said, ‘ Hell ; ’ I asked him, Did he live there ? and I suppose he meant yes, for he said ‘ He was d—d.’ After a while I found out he was born underground, where coal grows ; that his fathers and mothers, for thousands of years had burrowed under ground ; and he did say it was lucky for them, for when the flood came on the earth, they were in the pit as snug as—(but I won't repeat) ; he said too, that while they were down there and could not go up to the daylight, they were so long in company with devils that they learned their language, and that's how it came to be all oaths and curses. I never knew what real old-fashioned blood could do in that line till then ; but I should know good blood, that is real flood-blood, anywhere by the same sign ; and I must say it's a pity you didn't swear more freely at first, I should have known your quality at once, and I hope I know my place. Honour me by passing.”

And Mr. Mottram with mock gravity touched his hat, and drew his horse as much to one side as he durst in the circumstances—tipping the wink to his master as much as to say, “ You needn't be abashed—see how I've doubled him up ; ” for this had been Mr. Mottram's design throughout, to take off the edge of the crusty old baronet's temper, and give his master time to recover himself from any nervousness

he might feel. Charles had felt embarrassed at the prospect of encountering one who had been represented to him as so fiercely enraged against him—and the humorous scene which he had partly witnessed was of great service to him—enabling him to pluck up heart even to the extent of indulging in a little banter if that should prove desirable—at any rate, as he sat gracefully and easily on his horse, he did not look as if mere bluster and cursing would browbeat him—and he was the first to speak :—

“Good morning, Sir Ethelred ; difficult passing in this narrow lane—how did you manage it—not raised the hair on your horse—splendid creature !”

“I feel honoured, sir, by the admiration which a perfect stranger to myself pays to my horse. Are you a judge in these matters—perhaps in the profession, now I look again, eh ?”

“Your memory’s short, Sir Ethelred ; or, perhaps, your sight failing—we can’t expect to last for ever, it’s true—but you should by rights know Charles Barton, though you have not perhaps the same reason to remember him—the same inducement rather, I should say—which he finds amply sufficient to fix Sir Ethelred Harkyside indelibly in his memory.”

“If, as you say, you be that Charles Barton who has played false to his party and family, and turned traitor to his king—I say—Avoid, let me pass, for I’ll none of you.”

“Be it mine, Sir Ethelred, to lament the priceless treasure I have lost ; but if fair words might bespeak so great a favour—to what do you allude ?”

“Allude ?” rejoined the baronet, stung by the cool irony of tone with which Charles had spoken—“Sir, do you know that I have sworn by my father’s tomb that I will horse-whip you one of these days within an inch of your dog’s life, you false imp ! Ay, and I would do it now on the spot, but that your pale weak look tells me your crime has met with some of the punishment you have so richly deserved. You’ve been ill, I hear—very ill, I see—thank God ! but I would He had finished you, for I am sure your cup of iniquity must have run over these *months* past. How dare you, sir, show your sneaking face in these parts, aping the country gentleman ? Do you dream

sir, that the mere accident of your having the loan of your father's house entitles you to trespass—to ride about in my lanes blocking them up with your unguillotined carcass? Make way, I bid you, before my blood's too up to spare your mealy face! Stand aside, I say—”

But Charles was neither very well able, nor in any way disposed to comply with the choleric old gentleman, so he merely kept his temper under the violent abuse of the baronet—and when the one had blown himself with his wild vehemence, the other quietly said—

“Now, Sir Ethelred, perhaps you would oblige me by explaining what all this means—I come back to my own home and neighbourhood, and find myself worse treated—I mean what I say—in a more ungentlemanly manner—than I was even by those grimy, low-bred radicals.”

“Glad to hear it.”

“What are you glad to hear?”

“That they treated you badly—served you right—always is so.”

“Ay, but you don't say you are glad to hear that they behaved like perfect gentlemen compared with men of sound principle, and if I may say so, men of true religion like yourself, Sir Ethelred.”

“Sound—religion (staring incredulously)—me? What then you're not a Radical devil after all?—thought not—knew it couldn't be so—a man who has blood, and ten thousand a year, at least would have had, if he hadn't had a jackass for a sire, and a lunatic pauper for a dam; excuse my freedom, but I'm honest, you know of old” (Ahem! so-so—thought Mr. Charles, certainly far from civil)—“Give me your hand, Charles—true blue to the back bone, eh? D—n the Radicals—how's your respected father?—used to miss him very much at first—never could bear the new man—low doctrine and low origin altogether—never went to church but once since your father left, nor before either, except to a funeral or two—but then that was not out of any disrespect to him—not at all—I knew he was all right—and besides, I was wild in those days—all men are a little, you know, on your side of *forty*—you are, I dare say. Don't say no. How's your

mother—oh, I forgot—I meant your wife—not of this county, I think ?—One of the right sort, I'll be bound—never knew a Barton take a fool for a wife—at least—well, now, what a load off my mind. You'll dine with me—don't say no—you don't look strong enough for the run—but we shall be drawing home towards sun-down—only to think of that idle, lying vagabond, Grogram, telling me you were a Radical still."

"Did he tell you so, Sir Ethelred ?"

"Yes, he did—the liar !"

"Why, so far you musn't be hard on him ; for I did somehow get mixed up with a set, who led me on with a precious lot of cant about principles."

"Principle be hanged—be true to your party—THE party for there is only one that's worth being true to. Never mind apologies, you're all right now—that's quite enough for a gentleman ; and I'm glad to hear it—and Grogram is a liar ; but I'll stop his bleating in double quick time, the rascally sheep-face. But good-bye—you look poorly—pick up heart, Charles. You'll be all right in a week or two, with that cursed Radicalism off your conscience—and I shall be late. I'll make all right with the hunt—and, by the way, this is Grogram's day—I'm d—d if I don't play him a trick—the scurvy pate ! He's always in at the death, lawyer-like ; I'll be in too to-day, clap the fox in my pocket, and throw Groggy to the dogs—aha !—he'll make a capital fox—sly and brown—the hounds will never know the difference. God bless you." And away went the red coat flapping in the wind, and the red face redder than of old ; and the worthy owner of so much red covering murmured to himself as he went—"Lucky thing for Charles he let out in time, before the old red blood was fairly up."

We doubt about its being such a very lucky thing—but that's not our concern ; and besides, Mr. Charles himself agreed so far with his reconciled neighbour, that he thought he had come through very well, with flying colours. He felt as if he had acted a manly and straightforward part in the entire business, and rode homewards like a man who has outlived a false impression, and regained his right position. When he arrived at home he was in high spirits ; and as he

narrated the particulars of the ludicrous scene between Mottram and Sir Ethelred, and then recounted with some excusable variations his own share in the adventures of the morning, the dear girl's face shone not only with love, but with pride too—for she thought, as most mere plebeian girls do, that a baronet, even though he was a roystering fox-hunting bacchanal, was more than a match for ordinary men, so that she could appreciate, and did in words extol the courage and wit which Charles (according to his own account) had displayed. Charles noted this flush of the pride he had so longed to awaken, and he inly resolved that if in no higher sphere, yet most conspicuously in the circle of the neighbouring gentry he would shine henceforth to her complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEST SOCIETY.

THE wish which Sarah had expressed in the course of that morning drive of which we have spoken was fulfilled ; but its reality was not exactly what she had pictured to herself, especially in one point which had not entered into her calculation. A succession of invitations involved a definite number of return visits, and in the course of these return visits new engagements of a festive kind were forced upon the happy, home-loving pair. The circle of acquaintance was greatly widened, that of friendship was also widened until deterioration in quality was evident, and dissipation in some sort inevitable. The immediate wish of both hearts was not, however, to be gratified. Mr. Drake had, as we have seen, pleaded term-time and the like. Mr. Barton, after long waiting, as if he had striven hard to say, "Yes," pleaded heart-sickness, painful memories, and abundant consolation in his own sweet evangel—his daily life of doing good ; in addition to the blest knowledge that his beloved children had really a bliss which they longed and could afford to show him. And so these two hearts were gradually drawn from that peaceful home-

life so sweet to one, so safe to both. The gay world with open arms bade the recreant welcome to its glittering halls, forgave him his early treachery to the good cause, which bound them to each other with silver cords, and shut them up from the dust and noisome vapours of the brawling world around. They forgave the low birth of the young wife for her simplicity's sake, and for the sake of that goodness of nature which they could appreciate by force of contrast, and which they were well enough skilled to use. Her innocent relish for the sprightly and exciting incidents of this new life covered a multitude of sins. They stretched out their hands to her as they would have done to receive some fresh plucked rose with the spring dew still trembling on its leaf. It was refreshing to see such artless and genuine happiness—such naive pride in small matters—such hearty faith in all these hollow conventional splendours of politeness—it came amongst them as a mountain rill, amidst their arid life.

As for Charles, truly he had found his element, and was fulfilling his mission in the world (not by any means an evangel). He had long complained that destiny and desire were at issue. Here they met and became one. Conspicuous he desired to be, and amidst all this superficial tinsel glory his personal glory shone to advantage; and for a time he deemed the sphere a worthy one. Adulation was no longer the bribe for service to be rendered; it was the spontaneous offer of men and fair women who seldom had it to bestow—even for a purpose; it was the consideration due and rendered to one who had resisted the fascination of the prevailing madness; (who might indeed have given way for a time, and no wonder if he did, when one considered the price which such helpless ignorant masses would be willing to pay for such a fair sample of aristocratic wisdom and influence;) but who had promptly seen and retraced his errors, bringing back not only the ordinary zeal of a renegade, but all the advantages of having been a favoured and trusted dweller in the enemy's camp, able and ready to marshal the forces of Toryism direct to the points of attack which he knew to be least ably defended. And really it is not too much to say that Charles deserved the marked attention which was bestowed on him

on every hand. We know that his qualities were not very brilliant, or not so very decidedly great as to have left any impression elsewhere; but in this circle, so conceited and effete, his acquirements of every kind, but chiefly those which he had taken up with in his recent course of life, were astonishing, and coming from one of themselves were unconsciously exaggerated by the very force of that conceit which had hitherto prevented them from forming any acquaintance with that noble, struggling, soaring world, which in their ignorance they dared to count for nothing.

Insensible dullards that they were, mere logic, mere moral reasoning would have made not the smallest impression; fortunately for Charles's good opinion of himself, he was no adept in the handling of these weapons, nor are they weapons which every common juggler can wield without showing the trick to the spectator. But by dint of a highly impressionable nature, and a memory still vivid in its pictures of all that had made him feel strongly, he was enabled to present strong points in strong lights, sometimes startling the moon-eyed squires, or their star-eyed daughters, by putting the case as against themselves in so tremendous a light that they could not fail to see it, and trembled in strange suspense until he who had raised the inexpugnable fortress was pleased to exert an equal force in knocking the fortress down. Sometimes he would put the questions then in agitation in such a form as to make them feel that they must lie in their throats to say "No" to his position; sometimes brought these questions to exhibit so important an influence on their own dearest interests, that they would rather believe in Reform than not, and there was a feeling of shame mingling with their sense of relief when he came forward in his real character as a "true blue," to combat the arguments, to strip off the ingenuous disguises which had all but converted these obstinate old political mummies. He had a double advantage over his sapient audience. Not only was he familiar with the new school doctrines in their most faith-compelling aspects, but having been in the front of the great hot battle line for a short time, he was in possession of arguments on the *Conservative side* of all questions which these stuffed antiquities

had never dreamed of—had never felt the need of—until they heard how much Charles could say in behalf of the revolutionary party ; then they were amazed at as well as grateful for the reinforcement which he deployed always just at the right moment, to save them from the horrible conviction that they were a set of unjustifiable, inexcusable, indefensible, and withal unendurable worn-out old humbugs. In that outer darkness, too, of the great world, in which for a few dreadful weeks the young squire had gathered a personal acquaintance with vice and its huge brood of woes, there was (there is) an actual vigour of life which he had unconsciously caught—at least in his tone and manner of speaking—new and wonderfully telling in that dried-up, stately society. They had known it only by the distant imitations of the stage ; they had soiled the velvet cushions in the circles with tears, and shaken the silken curtains with sighs at the grief and abominable depravity of low life. But here, trembling in their very midst, thrilling into their hearts' depths in every word spoken there was the energetic and picturesque reproduction of scenes that had been lived through by one of themselves ; not that he confessed his painful experience, or allowed it to be supposed that his knowledge was direct, or his pathos anything beyond the exercise of native powers ; to confess all this would have been to throw down the vista scenes of his stage, and to show to the horrified audience the square-capped, sooty-faced, porter-guzzling Jove, who did all the thunder for a shilling a night. In short, Charles had found a circle of human beings, who were in his eyes at that time the cream of good society, and, beyond all question, they were below his own level, and he SHONE CONSPICUOUS. This success, however, was not likely to be satisfactory or even continuous. In a little while the excitement would subside—the audience become as clever as the actor—the whole circle shaken, like a pack of cards shuffled, and each picture-card acquire a new relative value for new games. None knew better than Sarah how really elated Charles had become with this fleeting success, and in a loving fear of hastening a crisis of disappointment, she forbore to feed his vanity after the first few occasions, in all which she shared his elation. This abstrain-

ing from the only voice of praise he cared to hear was keenly felt by him, and something very like resentment took hold of his mind, bringing about a partial alienation from a being so worthy of all trusting love, if only for her own wise mistrusting love. Before this feeling of estrangement arose, or perhaps contemporaneously with it, there came the weariness and distaste, and deep discontent, which Sarah had feared would sooner or later ensue on this undue, unworthy pride and triumph. This state of mind revealed itself in many ways, but we know it chiefly from a letter which his father addressed to him about this time, part of which bears on this very state of feeling. Charles had written to Arlton to explain why they could not come and spend their Christmas with the solitary father; and in the course of his letter he gave vent, as he had done often in the old days, to expressions of dissatisfaction with himself and his "baffled aspirations"—his "talents hidden in napkins"—his "large heart cribbed, cabined, and confined"—for want of a sphere at once worthy and congenial, with intelligible hints of trying politics once more. The portion of Mr. Barton's reply which bears more directly on these points we will give.

"You speak of 'baffled aspirations,' my dear boy. Are they definite longings? Have they ever taken shape; and in such shape have they been defeated and discouraged? You do not say, but perhaps you will think, from the very form of my inquiry, that I am a stranger to your disquiet, and can have no sympathy with my Charles. It may be that when I was at your age I suffered indolence to sap all the vigour from the young shoots of fancy, as well as to muffle the suggestions of benevolent ambition. But I feel a very youth in the strength of my ambitious passions now, and when I think that your overflowing zeal can find no regular outlet, but becomes a sorrowful burden to you, I must thank God that He has dealt with my nature as He will soon deal with the tender unsounded virgin depths of our dear Sarah's nature,—to her He will give in one blest moment the highest duty, and a new passion to render its fulfilment easy and delightful,—to me He gave the sphere and the mighty impulse of a holy ambition so closely together that I know not how to place them. He pointed out to me as I stood 'idle all the day long,' the vineyard that He loves so well, showed me that it needed all that love, and bade me be the minister of His beneficent care to the neglected spots within, and even while I looked at the day-task of my life, (and now high noon with me,) the work became a joy to me, and I sprang to it in the assurance that when

the night came, and His voice should bid me rest and reckon, I should have done my task. Oh, Charles, I know that the world in its ordinary life has many intense and glorious battle-fields for the choice of one so young and ardent as yourself; but if I could do what my heart prays without ceasing for the power to do, it would save you many a pang, and make you unspeakably rich and glorious at once and for ever. Applause may strain ten thousand throats, and rise as welcome incense to the young, when he has won men's gratitude by falling in with their desires or prejudices, or palpable passing welfare; but would you compare it with the tribute of a sigh, a tear, a broken heart, wrung by words of unwelcome truth, humbling, irritating rebuke? To conquer thus is double victory and deathless glory. To run counter to the lust, the ingrained habit, the idolized faith; to root up one after another well-grown vices, and to cast their poisonous life into the furnace—to turn a man almost by main force until he hate his former self, brands with everlasting shame a whole life of which he had fondly boasted, and which he had sworn should go on unto the end unchanged,—I say, to crush this mighty host of lust, prejudice, self-interest, pride—to drag it in its shame in the dust before the man's face,—this is itself a victory which all politics, and all science, and all artistic skill can never match. But, beyond this, to be welcomed, blessed, revered, loved, followed, to have prayer made for one continually, by the very lips of the very men who cursed, and shouted defiance and enmity to the death—by those whose corrupt hearts you have wrung and crushed, and held up bleeding in the face of day as trophies of your triumph,—this is a triumph like to His who crucifies the world to men, and men to the world, that He may teach them how to love Him as His infinite heart would fain be loved. This double victory is only given to those, my dearest one, who, in the spirit of the Great Captain of salvation, first crucify themselves. Such victory has been mine, so sweet, so satisfying, that if there were no other crown, no recompense unspeakable and full of glory, no hereafter, I would die a thousand times to achieve it. Would you try with me? Shall I, need I tell you in what field I toil and fight so strenuously, and yet so gloriously triumphant? You know well, dear Charles, what I mean; but how can I urge you with fervour—it might look so like reproach that I should blush to look upon you when I remember the long shameful waste in my own life's career; only in love of every sort for my only child would I dare to speak of these things,—I would have you rich in youth as I am in my hastening age; but I cannot expect that you would enter into anything like my own deep feelings on this matter—you have stood only on the flowery slopes, where the vine creeps laughingly from crag to crag, whereas I have climbed the summit, Charles, and seen the howling wilderness of fire and snow, and gazed with death-like qualms into the rolling depths of smoke and flame. You have never been brought into contact with the base, bare, unchecked hell-monster; you have seen the demon only in his holiday attire, his best company-smile. God,

thy father's God, forbid it now that ever you should know by fell experience how swiftly and how terribly may leap forth from the demon smile the fire-flash that shall utterly consume."

Alas, could father on earth more than this to save his boy? How quickly would his fervour have leaped up into frenzy, had he but known that his son had wandered within the scorching circle of those flames, which seen but not felt had filled his own soul with terror. What agony was spared to the unhappy father by this ignorance! And can we say that this ignorance was a loss to the infatuated son? Perhaps, indeed, the beseeching of the broken-hearted, perhaps the solemn recital of the old and fatal secret, perhaps the tragic earnestness of one who had so long hoped and prayed against hope, and, in spite of Heaven's seeming silence, might have prevailed. But no: it is more likely that the discovery of the great secret to one of Charles's temperament and present bodily habit would have driven him to instantaneous madness, and it is almost certain that the mere love of the sorrowing parent would have been treated as something inseparable from dotage, while the appeal to Heaven would have stamped the once quiet clergyman as a decided fanatic in the judgment of one *so accustomed to rational conversation* as the son.

The letter did produce a powerful, but a very disquieting effect on the young mind. His mind was momentarily filled with envy of one who could so easily content the raging appetite of ambition, and then fell a-dreaming of the vast amount of good he would bring about, the sacrifices he would make for his fellow men, the blessed renown for benevolence which he would earn, the queen-like pride which his public life should beget in Sarah's heart—a pride all the nobler and stronger for being in sympathy with her religious affections. With closed lips and clenched teeth, pressing his hands together as in a spasm of heroic firmness, he stood realizing (still in a dream) the exultant pleasure of one whose name rings upon the world's lips amidst songs of praise. But the benevolent character of his ambition was accidental. That had been the last particular kind of glory presented to his mind, and when the fancy borrows the hues of charity even *ambition is beautiful*; but when the accidental is passed,

the substantial remains. Ambition without an object in which the whole nature is interested is fitful, hollow, worthless ; ambition without any object at all is idiocy beating the air. He who would transform ambition into a boon to his own heart must make it truly and consistently serviceable to others. He who would indulge ambition, and yet be happy, must set forth almost free from the influence of any such passion, mark out a line of simple duty, and call down into the depths of his nature for the enchanting power of the master-spirit only as occasion serves and prompts. The ambitious man who aims vaguely or by sacrilegious means to achieve self-glorification is still, as in every age, Prometheus Vincit with an eagle eating out his heart.

Charles was ambitious without an object beyond self-distinction, he had no objection to philanthropy as a means ; indeed, on reflection, it seemed to him the only means, the alternative of military glory not being at all to his taste. But if he had been a poor man, and destitute of education, and altogether ignored by the demigods of the great country party, his ambition would have been stripped of its borrowed colours even to his own thinking ; it would have been called by others *conceit*, and by himself secretly, *discontent*. Ambition is a large word, and now-a-days having become so generally associated with positive benefits to mankind, it has come to be the name of one-half all the virtues. Who would not be ambitious ? Who would not sacrifice much to have his restlessness and vanity so honourably named ?

CHAPTER VI.

A CHAPTER TO BE SKIPPED.

IN after years Charles referred to the present period of his long temptation with peculiar interest, not merely because of the eventful and gloomy awaking from all dreams to dismal, desolate reality, but because it was about the only period of *his* remembered life when he could associate pleasure with *drinking*. How could he make such association at all ? And

if he could make it, why not fix it with the light-hearted laughter of festive dance and song? We simply state that he did so far associate drinking with happiness, and that in no other connexion could he remember anything like happiness in vice. We might beg to be excused from analyzing this strange confession, on the ground that most probably his memory was at fault; but we will attempt to believe that he was right, and to show why it was. It would convey an unintentionally and yet an unavoidably false impression about the effect of alcohol, if we were to say that it *intensifies* all the passionate nature of man; and yet we can think of no phrase which comes so near to the truth, without doing some violence to truth of another kind—the truth of Taste. On the whole, we may, perhaps, come nearer to the truth by saying that alcohol excoriates (flays) the several passions or emotional faculties of the man. Under its influence they are rendered exceedingly sensitive, unnaturally so, unhealthily so, as at a well-acted play, but still, for the time being, really more sensitive, easily irritated, pleasingly or otherwise, according to the nature of the emotion. In the long run, the drink-habit is said to blunt all the fine sensibilities of the soul. Yes—but how? By repeated excoriations, and excessive handling of the delicate fibres: the titillation has resulted at last in numbness, paralysis, spiritual or emotional death. Those who have been brought up religiously, and are still addicted to habits of drinking, especially those who drink to what even the drunken world calls excess, know well the power of alcohol to revive, with added force, the convictions of long-gone years, to repaint the softly-shaded scene of a mother's sickening, dying hours, to quicken the heart's ear to the forgotten strain of evangelic love and wisdom, to make the heart swell as with the travail of regeneration, and the eye stream with penitential tears. Sneers chafe harshly on a soul *remembering*, even when fortified with drink; a faint smile may mock the inward sensibility, but can hardly conceal it. The tempter does sneer, the tempted one does smile, and the on-looker derides the maudlin, whether he know or ignore the power of pious recollections. But the truth is, *and it must out*, that the value of early example and counsel

tempered with love, asserts itself less in the meek deportment of the early rescued, than in the storm-girt soul of the prodigal in the very midst of his riotous revelry. Blameless men listen to the tale which would move Heaven to weeping, could Heaven know it all, with tearless eye and only the decent affectation of feeling; but the wretch, in the very hey-day of his lust and licence, in the very height of his heedless, devil-may-care indulgence, will burst into the violent weeping of the little child, do you but name the Crucified even to blasphemy. All the impressions ever produced at long intervals come crowding on to the stage at one time, and overwhelm the excited mind. It is well known, and has been often pointed out, that religious discussion is the favourite pastime of the drunkard, and that not a little of the peculiar virulence called *odium theologium* is owing to the influence of alcohol. But there is some error in regarding this disposition to religious talk as mere flippancy and as a sign of utter degradation; for, beyond all doubt, there is much more deep feeling, of a kind, at the bottom of such conversation, than in many an impassioned appeal from the desk. Cowper, in his inimitable humour, caricatured the boozy disputant on religious topics; but while we admit the external fidelity of his caricature, we do not hesitate to assert that the untoward vehemence of discourse is not solely attributable to the physical excitement of wine, but often to the influence of that stimulant on the buried recollections of genuine feeling. That wine does not infuse into the mind the religious element—but, as of old, it opens the heart; and though it shows only how great is the waste itself hath wrought, it enables us to infer how rich has been the store of heavenly wisdom and grace lavished, at some time or other, on the unfaithful spirit. Again, if we overhear a man stuttering, with drunken utterance, expressions of passionate love for the woman who, at the very moment, may be peering in at the window in haggard, wistful, hopeless wretchedness—sore, lame, sick, and with a heart full of hate and fear, because that skulking demon has robbed and wounded her, and left her in shame and woe—shall we exhaust the strange phenomenon of his moist eye, and clenched hand,

and throbbing breast, by saying, "Hypocrite"? On the contrary, he is himself again. Beside himself (as he now is), if you will; a hypocrite, when his tears are falling into the fire-draught that has withered the fair flower, the memory of which he is recalling, and in the early fragrance of which he once rejoiced, but finds no longer any pleasure. But he is himself *again*—the old self that has been long huddled under the rags, and scars, and scowling aspect of his base sin—the old self that has been overshadowed by the demon—hell's blackest and earth's favourite demon—until it has lost all the original brightness—the old self since perverted and changed almost beyond identity. He is carried from the present, not in fancy only, but in feeling. He is living over again the gentle raptures of the fondest passion; he is pressing to his bosom the frail and trembling form; he is drinking in, through those parched lips, the imperishable sweets of love's first kiss; he is pouring forth thought upon thought, vow upon vow, sweet words of tender truth upon sweet words of thankfulness and bliss. He is himself again—the self of yesterday, not the self of to-day. Mark how the tear-drop rolls, leaps, hisses from that scorching eyeball, as it glares vindictive, devilish upon the wan face in the misty passage. Mark how the prayer of that lean, beckoning finger has invoked the loosed fiend within. The man that once trembled with obedient joy before that angel spell is gone, lost, perished; and in that midnight hour it is the tenfold child of hell that has leaped into the smouldering carcase, and assumed the name, the power, the hallowed right of husband,—for what? To drive home the fire-bolts of perdition in the writhing heart. A moment ago, and the orison and vesper of a loving soul were blending, they were but echoes, but they once had been; and, oh, how sweetly did the very echo come back to the spirit long silent and heedless; but now the demon galvanizes the brute clay, fires it with infernal rage, drives it to worse than infernal murder, and the devil-possessed in a few days fulfils the contract, which he sealed in blood and fire, on the gallows. In God's name search about, and ask who let this raging devil loose?

The drunken man is so mixed up with the horrors of a

sinful life, that his dreams are mainly peopled with the goblins of dismay and danger ; but as the maddening draught doubles outward vision and clothes actual terrors with an unreal hideousness, so also will it in the seldom times of pleasant reverie exaggerate all joy that ever has been, and magnify into present glory all dreams of bliss to come, all purposes of noble action—all the faint streaks of the eastern sky fuse and mingle, spread and glow, until the splendid noon rides high in heaven. Charles remembered, and told in after years, how in the madness of the passing hour he thought not of himself but others, of the oppressed in every clime—of the poor, perishing in the night wind ; of the outcast, hastening to suicide as to an only friend, a waiting lover ; of speeches fraught with eloquence that surpassed all other voices of the age in brilliance and in effective power ; of honours won by hard effort, great sacrifice, undaunted faith, and then scattered like a great conqueror's gifts among the needy crowd, to be gathered afresh in the tumultuous plaudits, heaven-rending. How the cardinal truths of redemption, which in sober mood he could barely tolerate and affect to feel, now burst upon him with a self-claiming, heavenly force, melting his heart till very penitence became a fountain of gladness, girding his wild purposes of good with strength and majesty, and breathing ever on his languishing zeal the impulse of the love divine. And Charles was wont to tell too, how dreadful was the hour—the intervening hour of soberness in each day's madness—not for the mere physical longing and decay, not from mere sickly penitence, not with mere animal impatience, but far more terribly to one like him, with the plain conviction that drink had so far befuddled him as to make him blind to its real character and to his own—and now that he had come to his right mind—oh, what a contrast—what a mind was that ! So hollow, so empty of all good, so seared and polluted, so dissatisfied, and so far spent, so shaken and ruined, so sunk and lifeless, that in madness only was he sane ; in vice only could he find the charm to strike the rock and make sweet waters flow ; only in self-degradation dare he esteem himself, then only feel the divinity within when all men counted him a soddened lump, or

a bewildered maundering idiot. He would recall the days of comparative innocence when, with his young wife by his side, he would lounge for hours in the shaded tree-seat, the wine spell partly on him, filling his soul with worthless ecstasies as it changed the serene and golden air without into a bright film, a haze crowded with lovely fantasies in shape and colour. He would recall for himself and others the silly enthusiasm which at Charity dinners nicknames champagne, virtue. Shame would fall upon his brow as he remembered silently the graceless boast, the fine-sounding period, the sparkling eye, the waving glass, the shout thousand-tongued, the list of monies given, and welcomed as though it were the approval-list of Heaven's own final judgment; and he trembled when he had been thinking awhile over the swift evaporation of all that flummery, and the cheerless, morose void left in his own heart—trembled to think with what harshness, with what mean cunning of cruelty, with what grasping avarice, with what falsehood, merciless and reckless, would many who had made the Tavern welkin ring with almost supernal virtue recompense their blatant folly at the expense of others. But his experience of London charity was later on and lower down in stages of moral decline where we have no thought of following him. He felt, however, in the retrospect, that if the uncurbed flight of fanciful passion incident to excessive drinking might almost be excused under its appropriate name of insanity, the hardly less strange vagaries of the imaginative faculty under the influence of festive, or social, or private moderate drinking, verged too nearly on hypocrisy to be anything but subjects of unmitigated self-contempt; and, therefore, did his voice fail, and shake, and struggle—not because he feared the issue to which moderate drinking might lead, but because itself was an issue, a dreadful doom, a debasement which made a man a hypocrite and a fool at the same time—a fatal source of injury, besides, to all social well-being, by introducing counterfeit charity far and wide, to the obscuring and even thrusting out of the lowly eldest daughter of the skies. With vision cleared by celestial touch, he looked on these men still blooming with the honours, and radiant with the *marvellous* conceit of virtue, and he shuddered to

think that such was he once, so inconsistent, so canting, so deluded—a stumbling-block to all progress, a spectacle of inane self-assurance and blundering paradox to the angels of God. In truth, Charles became very paradoxical as well as very zealous, and he used to say, a man might or might not become a drunkard in the old sense of the word—it was a matter to speculate about, and to bet on, with the odds heavy against the man; but the mischief was done, so soon as a man could drink and set himself to justify his deed. The tempest had ceased to lour—it had burst. Time might swell the furious flood;—accident might direct its course so as to ensure visible ruin, but, whether or not, the mischief was done. The man's moral nature, his conscience, judgment, heart, stood out shelterless in the rainy blast; already had the ceaseless flashes smitten him numb and blind. So long as the taster disliked, dreaded, hated and repented of his sip, there was some faint chance for the restoration of his moral powers to their former soundness; the shame-brand was indeed the only reason for hope, but it was welcome as the one star in so much blackness. But when men drink and say there is no harm, no wrong, to God and man, even that one hope is clouded; and when they really see, as they have too soon said they saw, no evil in moderation—there is no hope left from beneath or from within. The oracle of God is henceforth silent, for its inspirations have been quenched and its plain warnings derided. If the abandoned one should perchance become a drunkard or a murderer, no sane man can feel any surprise; they only, who by bereavement of sound sense, are themselves in constant danger of the like outward show of their inward actual shame, affect—nay, they do feel (so quick is the wasting progress of corruption) surprise; and say—who would have thought it? Charles might, in his sensible days, be a little paradoxical, and disposed to take odd and extreme views, but he did confess that his feelings were those of a physician who felt sleepless alarm through all stages of a patient's fever; but when all was over, ceased to care anything about it—left the corpse to be laid out as others might choose, to be galvanized by quacks, or scorched by hot hand-irons, or soused in ice-water, or anything

else. For his part, he had forgotten all about the case, and the corpse was nothing to him. So Mr. Charles expressed himself on more occasions than one; and it is supposed he meant what he said. Paradoxical? It might be—but it all depends on with what eyes, and from what point you look at such things. It may be that an abstainer is the only competent judge, and then, if such be the general decision of abstainers, there is no appeal. If there were no abstainers, there would be no difficulty, we imagine, in seeing the force of this principle: “That he who is least drunk is best able to tell how drunk his companions, severally, are.” To wit—

Two apprentices have been out for a lark, because their old master has been out on business. They bring home with them—and take up stairs, to their little den in the attic—a small bottle of unadulterated British Hollands. In the silence of advancing night, with the sweet relish of secrecy they swallow painfully small thimble-fulls of the real genuine article; anon, the dread voice of authority bids them “below there,” to look for the day-book which is missing. “Do I look queer about the eyes, Bill?”—“No, not a bit, do I?—I feel all right.” “Can you smell my breath?”—“Not a bit—chew a peppermint-drop—here—there’s two.” Now the next question of importance is—How has the worthy authority “below” been spending the evening? If he has been having ever so slight a spell at the same reputable business as that just interrupted—happy are those youths! If, however, his share of the comforts of life is yet untouched (even though his stomach craves)—the absolute certainty is, that to the master’s eye these hapless boys will look drunk, and to his unvitiated nose these boys will smell drunk, and the unparched tongue which bellowed for them down stairs will curse them back again to their now prison-like retreat, as a couple of drunken villains. It all depends, you see! So did it use to be with the worthy baronet Sir Ethelred. More than once, as he sat on the bench, fresh from luxuriant French coffee, French rolls, and no French brandy—(as he was not going to hunt)—had he found occasion to reprove, in no set phrase, the villanous stench of morning three-penn’orths—*had even been moved, by a sense of duty to his sovereign, to*

convict one scoundrel who had drunk enough over-night to find all his pump applications futile, and who still looked, smelt, and spoke as one far in liquor. How fortunate for that hapless one, too, would it have been if the petty sessions had been held after the worthy baronet's dinner ; say in the interval of the second and third bottle. Then, doubtless, his worship would have been ready to outface all attesting constables, and to declare on his honour as a gentleman that the man was perfectly sober and was giving his evidence in a very *cr—cr—*creditable manner. Or, if such a thing could have been in those ancient days, suppose his worship had been photographed, say about that same time—the second—third stage, and if the result had been brought before him after breakfast any morning (not a hunt day), who can doubt that a fine sense of English honour would have led him instantly to sentence the picture to the tread-mill.

It all depends, you see, on how you look at a thing. There surely is no occasion to support this well-known fact by reminding the moderate man how often he himself has been insulted (and, as he thinks, grievously misapprehended) by would-be friends, who have winked at him, nodded mysteriously, trodden slyly on his toes, and urged him that “he had better come along home ; do now, there's a good fellow ; nobody says you *are* drunk, and nobody shall—come along.” Such officiousness on the part of one's companions, who, to the eye of a third party, might appear as muddy as oneself is miry, is too poignant and too well remembered to require any hint from a book to call it up. But bethink you, friend, how must you stand in the esteem of one who never drinks—who can smell you (though you have had only one glass of hot brandy-and-water), six carriages off in the night-mail, or says he can—whose stomach turns at the smell of the first word you utter to him, however sweet that word may be—whose clear, sound, healthy heart can make but slight distinction morally, between you and the battered carcase of your neighbour as it passes on a stretcher to the lock-up or infirmary. Bethink you of this, as you recall, with some *slight* disposition to forgive, the officious rebukes of the comparatively sober ; for these men, now, thank God ! at every

street corner, and in every train, are *positively* sober ; how harsh, then, must be their judgment, if they simply judge as truly in proportion, as your boon companions are in the habit of judging of you. Paradoxical, then, it may appear to some, but to Charles Barton it was plain truth, that the vast evil which he saw everywhere around him, when his eyes were opened, and from which the bitterness of his own lot had so greatly sprung—lay in the use rather than in the abuse of alcoholic mixtures ; the two words were identical in meaning with him, and hence it arose that when he did shake off the chains of his long slavery, it was with revolutionary ardour that he embraced the new freedom.

CHAPTER VII.

LOST LOVE.

THE round of Charles's daily life was gradually smoothed into sameness, and when the narrow circle of pleasures began to pall, and, at the same time, the habits of life through which they had been sought had become fixed, there remained no alternative from entire change, which just then seemed wholly out of question, and a more constant addition to stimulants by which the faded excitements of society might be furbished anew. During the few remaining weeks of the year, there was a succession of visitings, and sporting, drinking, gambling, hunting, coursing ; each exciting enough when novel, but from their very nature requiring foreign stimulus, and rapidly becoming mere occasions for indulgence in the one ruling vice. He was still the admired of those who had any powers of admiration left ; but he found in this also a weariness, and it sickened him when he found that it led to nothing—that it could not keep pace with his appetite for distinction—that it was on the other part quite as much the gratification of an idle self-indulgence as any tribute to his superior worth. Even this faint praise was denied him for anything he did, or said, or projected, in ordinary and sober moods. He knew that only as he reflected the ruby flash of the wine-cup, would fair

eyes sparkle in answer to his wit, or some few noble hearts respond with wondering gratitude to his high and generous sentiments, or stout arms flourish high the wild hurrah for Queen and country—the Queen whose name he profaned with his polluted breath, and the country that he robbed of its right to her son's best service by his sensual indulgence. To the wine-cup, however, he must now more than ever recur. Not only was his heart intolerably dull, but his mind was asleep, and his conversation pitifully feeble, apart from the exhilarating spirit.

Of late his dear wife had gladly found an excuse for absence from these tiresome convivialities, in her personal health. She was truly disappointed when she saw the spiritual and intellectual nakedness of the land whose Goshen and Eschol had sent such flattering first-fruits. Naturally her thoughts were weaned from the heartless gaiety, and came home to her heart, to watch, to pray, to waste themselves at times in vain queries, and vague wonder, and tremulous anxiety—then to rise up in all-confiding worship to the throne of helping love—to linger there in the heaven-world for hours—to grow sweet and delicate, and pure, by a Divine communion, only to render her indifferent indeed as to her own future, but doubly fearful for her Charles—her beloved—her truant brother, lord, friend, and husband—and for the unborn. And had the shadow of that hospital scene crept so close to home that she could discern it, and was shivering in its cold gloom? No, not quite; but there was a painful sense of loneliness and loss now that all other riches were useless, and one only treasure longed for—the brave heart of a loving husband. She was lonely not in his frequent absence merely, but even more so in his presence, and the loss left a void which made her shriek in her dreams, as she thought she was gazing into blank space.

His love had gone; the fungus-growth had covered it, and in silent darkness it had swiftly eaten the life out. Selfishness unchecked was, at the best of times, that which gave most semblance of earnest reality to his passion. The desire for self-exaltation in his wife's judgment was enough to explain every effort he had made which tended to her

pleasure. The consciousness of what he had passed through made him a coward, made him hopeless of ever really attaining any kind of superiority whatever from which he might sublimely look down on her, and to which he might lovingly call her up. The hallucination which had seized him for a few days after receiving the indiscriminating valueless praise of his neighbours had also passed away, and moroseness had settled down upon him so heavily, that only by the aid of wine could he assume, with any comfort or chance of success, the airs of one who still fondly loved. For a time Sarah was pleasantly deceived, and she drank in the free, sweet assurances of tender and anxious love, with all the relish of a woman when her need is greatest, and her whole nature is greedy for the dainties of affection. But as her own soul insensibly grew like unto the glorious Being in whose fellowship she lived increasingly, words and looks which aforetime would have passed unheeded jarred cruelly, spoiled the peaceful harmony of the spheres with which her meditations thrilled and bounded. Still, as her desire for highly-wrought affection grew, the supply came fast and sweet, and warm with heavenly life. The voice which had pleaded its own love now descanted on the higher love, which needed no plea with her, but nevertheless fell all the stronger on her ready spirit when it was breathed by that dear, eloquent voice. Often, in the darkening room, she would lie, as in a delicious dream, upon the couch, and open her whole being to him who spoke as if from a purer world than her own, bending over her as might an angel servitor. But her delusion could not last. When the lamps were lighted one evening there was no pause, no change; the low, musical drone went on, the lessons of immortal wisdom fell still, as from one inspired; she turned in the full blaze of light to smile her unspeakable joy—and oh! what saw she? Who was that jabbering ape lolling over her, as if some drivelling maniac had seized upon her very heart-strings to play awhile before he broke them—tore them—crushed them evermore? Who was that leering demon looking through the windows of her husband's soul, laughing, spying her innocent gladness, as of old the serpent peered from the rich foliage of Eden, envious and full of malice? Oh! it was

a cruel shock to know at once, beyond the power of excuse or explanation to alter or to hide, that her husband was possessed, and that the very prophecy of God was blasphemy, when spoken through him. Was confirmation needed? Alas, it was nearer than she thought! In the bright freshness of the winter morning she reproached herself with undue haste and all-unfounded fears, and in her guileless love she touched the string which but last night had answered in full chords of heavenly music; but now there was no answer, or it was the rude utterance of the real man, the embroiled one. There was the sullen, peevish retort, the repudiation of all sympathy in the jargon which he might have spoken in his cups—above all, there was the curse of reproach; and he who had bent above her couch in angel attitude leaped from her embrace, as though he loathed her wholly—charged her with taking mean advantage of his folly, in trying to make him a Methodist like herself, threw back in disdain the heart-breaking plea for pity, scowled in his trembling, deathly madness, till the good God shut her up in his cloud, deaf, blind, heedless, while the brutal possessed raged and swore. For hours she lay bewildered, sinking ever at the first return of memory and thought into fainting, swooning, seeming death. Hours after, when the day was dying, the cruel one stepped lightly in, and burying his head in her bosom, breathed forth passionate remorse for his vile deed, and even as she gave him the blessing he prayed so earnestly, she knew it was a vain blessing, that she was casting it away; she knew that *he*, the proud, the rarely faulty, was far away, and not that crouching, moaning thing that dared to deface her bosom with false tears. Oh! it was enough to kill her, to know that if love ever had been it was gone now, that if hope ever had hovered on their union it had winged its flight now, for only from lips fired by demon influence could she hear the language she had loved to hear—while from her own, her old, her only dear one in his right mind, she could only expect the repetition of the blow which felled her almost to the grave in its first descent.

In such a case as this, resignation quietly and unconsciously becomes despair; she had not strength—indeed, she had no *will to battle*; for no force, not even that mighty power of

truth which will sometimes sway the conscience, could avail her : 'twasa fresh, uncracked, unspoiled love which she pined to possess, that she might, without a fear or pang, lay the baby in those arms to rest securely, if she should be away in heaven, able only to watch. Such love there was not now ; it could, at best, be the self-distrusting love of the feeble penitent ; and could she calmly trust her unseen treasure to the embrace whence she herself had once been flung in passionate fury. Despair was the drear name of that sepulchral quiet in which she dozed away the hours of her anxious watching ; despair of him, and of his love, and of his power to protect her little one, and of his power to redeem and save himself. But not absolute despair : she had been too recently, too frequently, too close to the Giver of faith to be plunged by any hand, human or demoniac, into real, starless despair. But now all her hope was on high, and the serenity, the simple dignity, which her towering hope gave her, attracted Charles's notice ; it looked according to his changing mood—now like unforgiving pride, now like cold indifference to him and all things else ; but sometimes he thought it was a cloud of glory falling all around her, to separate them henceforth, and to bear her up to her home above, whose home on earth he knew was stripped of all its blessedness for her. Was there not the gnawing of the worm within, as thus he thought ? Ah ! yes ; but that worm might have been shaken off, if its fangs had been fully felt, or if there had been no immediate remedy ; and so it dared to make him feel a little of the anguish one day to be inflicted by remorse—dared that it might bid him drink the deeper, and the while bore its foul channel to the centre of his heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUDLE.

TREAD lightly as you pass : be swift, but still upon your gentle errands. Hushed be every sound of mirth or household care, for *this* is the house of pain. Weep not, or, if you

must, hide the tear as it falls, for this is the pain of hope, the only sorrow which, apart from heavenly grace, grows surely into joy. Hush ! and rejoice and tremble. Hush all beatings of the heart but sympathy and prayer. No thought of thine can stay, or heal, or hasten the sore grief that is upon the dear one now. Here is mystery in action, not dimly told in story, but presented to the time in all its unchanging solemnity. Here is the mystery of creation to be seen, not solved. May not the old-world story of the mighty genesis be true—so like in its simplicity and awful grandeur, so confused in its quick, startling changes, so far above all human insight ; may it not be literally true that through the formless void, the double firmament, there rolled the thunder of a Creator's edict ? "Let there be light." And when the light fell in showers on the mighty deeps and heights, God saw the fruit of his glorious work, and holy ones beheld, enraptured, the fair, gorgeous scene, until silence could no longer be, and the sons of Heaven's eternal morning, now first descending to the world, sang together. Here, in this birth-chamber, is the old glory revived—the glory of creation. The creature was not, save in the mother's loving thought. It was not, as are other beings, named, known, classed, counted ; for us, at least, it was without form, and void ; and as the great creation groaned in travail till the light fell, and none knew that there was a new creation but God himself, so now there is preparation, progress, tumult, heaving, melting, convulsion, till the light fall. Then does the fruitful earth rejoice ; then do its sons and daughters, wondering as if at a first and only birth, sing aloud for joy. How wonderful, how awful, how clearly from the Lord is the birth of a child ! Then close the listed doors, let fall the heavy curtains, let the crackling fire and the smothered whisper be the only sounds in the chamber of birth—more dread, if we but knew all, than the chamber of death. Hallowed be the sigh of travail, for the hour is holy, and twin eternities bend above the bed of pain, as of old the cherubim.

Charles had known in the morning that his wife was unwell ; but he had asked—and when did he ever ask and hear a "Nay" from those sweet lips ?—he had asked—and oh ! how welcome was this slight sign of tender interest—whether

he might (did she think) bring his friends, to whom he was as good as pledged, to dine in a quiet way, just to see the old year out. In the evening, then, the host and guests arrived, hard set with hunger, and, forgetful of his wife, Charles bade them welcome in the rude fashion of their degenerated courtesy. The dinner was over, the wine was flying fast, and the hours too. In the middle of their merriment the door opened, and Mr. Mottram appeared, with unsteady gait, but with a most steady expression of face, and, going up to his master, that worthy whispered words which made Charles start, and turn on him the full fury of a drunken frown. Poor Mottram, not used to fear, was all the more frightened now, and he hastened to excuse himself.

"I didn't mean it, sir; I beg your pardon; it isn't fault of mine, Mr. Charles—I couldn't prevent it, you know; and even if I could, those infernal women (why there's a houseful of 'em up and down) would have choked me if I'd set foot on the stairs. Please sir, don't be angry with me."

"Go to, you fool, I didn't mean that. What am I to do with these fellows? they won't budge for all the babies in creation."

Here Mr. Mottram's genius evidently recovered from its eclipse, for he rejoined, "Not the least occasion, Mr. Charles; you could hear a mouse creep in the passage close outside the door, for I listened just to see; and besides, my lady (I mean Mrs. Barton) is right away in a cockloft: goodness knows where they've put her—far enough from you, I'll be bound. Besides, in the circumstances, its fortunate they are here; you'll need some one to keep your spirits up, and I'm dreadfully in a low way myself to-night. You need do nothing at all. I'll just be prowling about, to get word how things go on upstairs, and come in and let you know."

"Very well, Mot, you can go, my boy: have a glass of wine?"

"Hallo, Barton! you're coming out in the democratic line rather. What does that 'wizened pig' mean by standing guzzling there right in my presence?" broke forth Sir Ethelred, of the Beetleskin estates, and the red nose.

"*He brings good tidings of great joy,*" was the blasphemous reply in explanation.

"What, from above?" said Sir Ethelred, and laughed like a choking hippopotamus. "What is it, Charles? A boy, I'll bet a guinea."

"Sex not known—baby not born, but on the road. Boy or girl, gentlemen, I'll take your bets all round either way. What say, Sir Hetty?"

"A boy, for a thousand guineas."

"Done," said the intoxicated husband."

"But mind, old boy, I'll have the chick, if I'm right; is it a bargain?"

"Yes, you shall; I don't want any brats, except for Sarah's sake, poor devil. I wonder how she is: go and see, Mot. Will no other gentleman oblige me with a bet; there may be two, you know?"

"Oh! curse me, I forgot that, Charles; let me hedge." But as there was no response, and the other worthies were looking on in dull amazement at the whole scene, the drift of which they were too far gone to catch, they began again with the one business which had brought them there, which business was to drink and be drunken, to talk obscenity and nonsensical politics, to prize horses, and devise remedies for faulty dogs, to sin the old year out, and sin the new year in.

At about eleven o'clock the door opened, and in rushed a tall, thin respectable female, neither lady nor servant, but something between, a very stately and decorous female, even when as now she condescended to rush. In she came, so excited, so deadened to her wonted sense of propriety and virgin delicacy, that she seemed not even to be aware that the delirious Mottram was stumbling in at her heels with his arms fast locked round her waist, shouting savagely—"Tell me, Miss Bethia, or by the Lord I'll grip you in two, and kiss you into the bargain!" But she had a mission—(as what woman has not?)—and she was not to be thwarted—so in a lean, but very appropriate voice she announced to Mr. Charles that it was a daughter, God bless her! and that she, Miss Bethia Gibbins was *so*, *so* glad, and that it was five minutes old—the picture of its papa; and Mrs. B. was as well as could be reasonably expected. The truth being that Mrs. B. was infinitely better than Miss Bethia had ever conceived it

possible that any woman ever could be in such shocking circumstances—much better than, in her opinion, any of them deserved to be—and, besides, this was her first direct acquaintance and participation in any such-like disreputable business. Charles felt a sudden spasm at his heart when he really understood that he was a father of a living child ; and even in his drunken stupor there was a flush of kindly feeling for the dear, dear wife, and of solemn thankfulness for the gift of the little daughter. He gave a rich jewel from his hand to the fair angel of annunciation, and a goodly benison in gold, much to the chagrin of the waist-embracing Mottram, who now regretted relinquishing his hold—so handy was the pocket into which the glittering pieces sank. Indeed, if there had been any possibility of carrying Miss Gibbins's deep-rooted prejudices by assault on such a night of all others—the hardy and arrogant bachelor would have married her out of hand.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DREGS OF THE CUP.

WHEN the door was closed, the unwieldy Sir Ethelred rose, and with ludicrous gravity stumbled through a few congratulatory sentences—proposed the health of the newly-born in thick words which nobody heard or cared to understand. Then drinking off his glass, and refilling twice in quick succession, drank again and again, as he said, a treble health, to father, mother, and baby. This was the sort of peroration which all could understand, and notwithstanding its powerful effect as a peroration, all could imitate in degree, to the very life ; all did so imitate, and then the bell rang, and Mottram was dispatched for a punch-bowl to christen the baby in, and all the servants he could lay hands on were to come in and stand sponsors at this Devil's font. The domestics came, did their devoirs as they best could, and vanished as quickly as they could from the strange spectacle (to them) of five (all but noble) gentlemen in the last frenzy of intoxication. The wassail mirth grew loud and furious, and when the great Hall

clock, and the neighbouring village bells rang out that another year had gone up to God with all its sins—these maniacs stormed and cheered, and held high riot in the midnight hour, when a new year and a new being were born unto the world. Oh, who would seek to dash the flowing bowl to the ground! Hark to their hilarity, their charity, the good-will of generous and softened hearts, breathed out in benediction, in prayers, in tears, in grasping of hands, in earnest affectionate embraces—who would deny the blessedness of the draught which could so bless and exalt the human spirit—all selfishness, and ancestral pride, and even money loving, melting on this birth-night of the heiress of a good old family. By the way, Sir Ethelred would like to see the baby—

“No, no—never mention such a thing,” squeaked out a young lack-brain, who had been three parts drunk when dinner began, and had now slept himself half sober; “you’ll be the death of the little beast—don’t be a bundle of old fools just because you’ve got a daughter between you. Besides, that old what’s-her-name will see you d—d first.”

“Who will? I should like to see them, any of them, see me d—d first,” said the madman host, and he rose staggering, but with a fixed idea from which neither dissuasion nor drunkenness could turn him. Steadier at each step, until he gained the door, then out into the silent hall, up the wide staircase white with the moonbeams, as the snowy fields without, up with stealthy tread, past the busts of the glorious dead who would have bidden their stone images to fall and crush him could they have known his hideous purpose—along the silent gallery, on every panel the frowning picture of some noble father of his house who would have perished rather than have sunk the chivalric shield of untarnished honour before the base temptation which had made him a willing victim. Was it—could it be that the long gallery of the illustrious dead, shook with the hisses of a thousand years; or was it but the wine seething in his brain?—On! no earthly voice hath power now—none is spoken. Great Heaven! art thou, too, silent? No human hand is there to stay him. *Father above—where, where was thine? What fiendish instinct led him straight to that hallowed spot—the resting-*

place of the weary mother and her nestling babe? Within, all was warmth, silence, sleep. The very dial ticked with potent force—the huge cat purred soothingly, peering into the sinking fire. The breath of the sleepers, soft as it were the waving of an angel's wing—that double breathing where yesterday there had been only one! Faithful friend, incredibly sleepless Bethia—why art thou too sitting straight up in that painful way, as if thou wert free of the waking world and couldst sleep no more, and yet asleep? The foot-fall of the thief is not a sound—it cannot stir even the half-wakeful Tabby—the bed is reached—hot-air pours in like blasts from hell on those sweet flowers. A moment, and the babe is snatched into its parent's murderous hands—away! The startled mother springs from her sick couch—wild—frantic—speechless—quaking; leaps to the floor—gazes out into the moonlit passage. Does she dream? Oh, God—what a dream! No. What means it? Is it Charles? What will she? If she cry, the house will rise—the husband she had so loved will be exposed for the first time (she thought)—oh, even now her heart beats so true. But, ah—the shadow yonder!—It stumbles—falls. That weak child-cry—answer, shrieking maniac mother, what ails thee in this midnight hour? * * * *

The thief had stumbled. The robbed mother obeyed the mighty inward cry of mother-love, and shrieked. He heard, but knew not what it meant. He never heard that voice again. The guests below were sobered by that loud, ringing cry; and rushing from the house as if incarnate vengeance were pursuing, gave no thought to horse or servants, but ran to the jingling echoes of that fearful peal of woe.

Charles was conveyed to bed; and when the morning of the new year dawned, he was in the earthly hell of brain fever. Sarah gathered up her remnant strength for a final sacrifice in her great love to him; she conjured the faithful Bethia to explain to none, to break no syllable of the truth—above all things to be a mother to the orphan baby, to shield it from that deranged father till in happier years it might stand between him and evil, between God and him, as intercessor for a sinful and accursed father, as a reconciler of that father to a

forsaken God. With one last effort she pencilled a few lines, and sealed them up, directing them to her second father, Mr. Drake, and then she suffered the waiting household to come in, and her mother hastening to her side besought an explanation which now the dear sufferer could not, and Miss Gibbins would not give, and when that New Year's Day, went up to Heaven it bore the meek and patient spirit of our stricken Sarah tenderly and safely to her God.

The weeks passed slowly on, and still the sick man gave no sign of conscious life. The father had been summoned to the scene of the great disaster. He had come with a reluctance and a dread which none could measure, but with the haste of that love which no fear could repress, no sin, no infamy on his child could quench. In vain he sought explanation of so much shipwreck ; none could tell but one, and her lips were sealed. Death had carried into heaven the record of her vow, and with rare delicacy, as well as faithfulness, Miss Gibbins put aside the eager questionings of the distracted father. From Mr. Mottram, however, who was sorely troubled, for a wonder, by this sudden explosion and catastrophe, Mr. Barton gathered that "Mr. Charles had been so long stretched in painful anxiety, that his nerves were fairly unstrung, and perhaps having taken a little more than his usual quantity, it and the nervousness together, had flown to his brain." Mr. Barton was glad to believe this, not that he had any suspicion of the real state of matters, but merely because with his new creed of abstinence he was disposed to associate all misfortunes whatever with the practice he had abandoned. He had for some time pondered more deeply the absolute necessity of his son's complete abstinence. He had exaggerated to himself the difficulty of such a step on Charles's part, for he knew by report, at least, the vast drinking capacities of the set with which Charles had recently mingled, and he was now glad to conclude, from the severe effects of one single hour's indulgence, that moderation was the rule of his life. With a heavy heart he pressed the motherless babe to his breast, praying that his dear Charles might be spared to guard and train the little one, but vowing, even in Miss Gibbins's presence, *that if need should arise, he would be more a father to*

this frail Lily than he had ever been even to his own Charles.

Miss Gibbins took advantage of this mood, to suggest that, in the circumstances, it would be better to remove the child to Arlton, lest (she said) the sight of it should retard the father's recovery by recalling his terrible loss. This was agreed to at once, and from out the vague conflicting notions which this proposal excited in Mr. Barton's brain, one seemed to linger until it grew definite and fixed, and that one was that Charles had been smitten thus fearfully by the stroke which laid his wife in the dust ; hence the forbearance of the sympathizing father, who would not for very mercy's sake allude to the painful truth that Sarah was indeed gone.

Bethia was at once installed in the double capacity of housekeeper at Arlton and nurse to the child which the dying mother had bequeathed to her especial care. For this great charge she had no particular qualification beyond that of scrupulous fidelity and a heart brimful of genuine kindness. She had had little or no experience in the management of either house or child, for in early life she had been left to make her own way in the world with a small property which she converted into an annuity, and which she sought to eke out by a system of private millinery combined with a genteel sort of general usefulness. Her unaffected piety had won from the first upon the kindred sympathies of Sarah, and especially as the hour of her great trial drew on, and her dependence on religious consolations became needful as her daily bread, when the brief luxury of human love had failed her. She had drawn the faithful companion nearer and nearer to her heart ; until, in that black hour of perished human hope and fleeting human life, she had bequeathed the solemn charge to her care. And truly few mothers could match the nurse hired with a mother's dying love and blessing, in the wise and kindly solicitude of every hour through each day and the many years of childhood, until infirmity overtook Bethia, and the return of the father from his long wanderings, rendered it desirable that she should remove from the immediate charge of the house and its beautiful young mistress. We have already seen *her in circumstances* which show her quaint benevolence,

and it is hardly too much to say that the lessons of practical goodness which her own affectionate nature drank in from the gentle duties of her former life, have been scattered like prized gifts among the homes of Arlton, to which, though amongst the latest professed, she had long been, and still is—"The Friend of the 'Friends of Home.'"

CHAPTER X.

REMORSE AND DESPAIR.

WHEN Charles was sufficiently recovered, he rose apparently an altered man. He was taciturn and peevish. He made no inquiries concerning that dreadful night, and when he had gathered from his father's conversation that the child was gone, was well, and well cared for, he gravely announced his intention of breaking up the establishment and going abroad. Once only did he steal from the house in the grey evening to visit the resting-place of his lost wife. In loneliness, in uttermost despair, and as he afterwards would say with shame, each thought a reproach, inviting to self-murder, he stood by the grave which he knew that his own cruelty had dug out for the beloved one. Months ago they had stood together there, and she had said, "Surely now God would show compassion to the race which had been so often smitten with untimely death." And now? He was himself the curse—the death-dealer, whose untimely blows she had so humbly deprecated. Aghast, and riveted to the awful spot, still no prayer of repentance broke the appalling silence of the temple of death; no purpose of amendment, and no vow of self-sacrifice, even with a view to self-redemption. He felt as almost all do feel who have clouded their moral nature by the insidious self-indulgence to which he had yielded—that he had been hardly dealt with—that his punishment was not only greater than he could bear, but for such trifling, amiable sin as his, far greater than he deserved. His state of mind was rebellion—fierce resentment against the God who had sought in so many ways to warn him, and thus to save him from this hour.

Mr. Barton felt that he was under all conceivable obligation to leave no means untried, if by any means he might lead this dear boy to the paths of righteousness and peace. He approached the theme with more than his ordinary confidence, for he judged that affliction had softened the heart of his son, as it had ever softened his own. But he misread those signs of deep dejection ; they were the index of rage rather than of subduing grief. Then, again, he relied upon his own tender and self-neglecting watch through the long weeks of sickness. Surely Charles would perceive the greatness of his love and recognize its well-earned right to counsel ; now, too, when they were about to part for years, perhaps for ever—the tie of sonship to be severed almost as much as had the tie of marriage been. But as he looked into the retreating, expressionless eye of his child, he misinterpreted still. Bitter was this first pang of downright defeat. He had held off for months from the direct attack, deterred by fears of failure, and of that which comes after failure of loving endeavours—estrangement ; but he had considered well all favourable circumstances, and inspired with the most joyous faith in his approaching triumph, he had advanced only to encounter a resolute and final shock, to be trampled on and spurned by the foot which he sought to turn aside from the ways of death. He appealed by all those arguments, again and again, which, if ever they had been used to him, he knew would have converted him at once. He touched with gentle and then with severe hand, the sore points of his boy's experience, reserving only the fatal secret, which even that intense passionate desire to save could not wring from his closed heart. All in vain ! The reply was simple, clear, cruel, final. " Father, forbear, and do not hope to change me ; for I desire no change ; I accept my fate as it is ; it is not of my seeking ; it shall not be modified by my consent. I did not merit all this cruel suffering. I could not baffle the Eternal, so as to ward off the blow ; but my pride will sustain me. I need no other grace ; it is the grace of resistance and true endurance ; such grace is mine, and none shall defraud me of it. Besides, hear me, father, for the last time ; *do not hope to turn me, for I tell you that you do not know me at all. I thought you did ;*

now I am sure you do not ; for had you, indeed, known me, your affection would have prevented you from using arguments and appeals every one of which has done more than all I have gone through to confirm me in utter self-abandonment, and in defiance of my fate. Let us part in peace ; for believe me, if there be a spark of human kindness left within me, I will feed it with kind thoughts of you, as with incense, and may God, for your sake (not mine) waft the scanty fragrance towards you in your sorrowful and lonely age."

Mere human love, then, failed to turn the wanderer from his errors, or, at least, to guide him homewards, as all milder influences had failed before. Decency, courtesy, the demands of social and public life, had wasted their welcome, and their frown alike, on the self-abandoned. Remained there any power above all these ; or must the warm heart of a pious father, there, and then, and henceforth for ever grow chill and callous ? Hope did not die ; in such a heart it was immortal, but it changed wholly into prayer. Arrangements were made in the course of two months for carrying out the intention of the still ailing and stricken widower. His departure would have taken place earlier, but for the sudden death of his neighbour, Sir Ethelred, and the arrival of his heir-at-law, Colonel O'Risk, in the neighbourhood. Singularly enough Charles recognized in him one of his old acquaintances and former partisans in London, though he had never supposed it possible that this light-hearted, affectionate, generous O'Risk, could be that same blood-thirsty, evil-designing, mean, half-crazed devil, whom he had so often helped to curse in company with the late worthy Sir Ethelred. O'Risk was fond enough of the O appurtenance in the old days, but he thought it rather an encumbrance in the altered circumstances of the present, and accordingly Charles was not in a position to identify or recall the man himself by the aid of the superb mourning card—"with Colonel Risque's compliments." When they met, however, it would have seemed to an observer that there must have been a very great amount of devoted friendship at the bottom of both hearts under the show of very ordinary civilities in the old days of political friendship. For a time it was just possible that Charles's plan might be consid-

rably modified by this event; but it turned out, after a process of mutual unbosoming, that Colonel Risque had not recanted his Radical notions on becoming a great landed proprietor, and that Charles had by no means cordially and thoroughly recanted; further, it appeared that the old leaven of Toryism was at present far too strong, and fusty, and fermenting, to allow a Radical any chance of peaceful residence in those parts. Accordingly both jumped to the conclusion at once, that they could do no wiser thing than pack up traps, and emigrate everywhere for a few years.

CHAPTER XI.

GROUND'S FOR SUSPICION.

As the necessary arrangements drew to a close, Mr. Grogram was, of course, in great bustle and high feather. Here indeed was an opportunity not to be lost. His own life was verging to the climacteric, but still, what might not be accomplished in "several years," by unceasing regard to his own interests in close connection with these neighbouring estates, ownerless to all (his) intents and purposes, and a helpless prey to such intents, whatever they might be. Brought into frequent contact with the menial Mottram, that contact became collision and mutual suspicion. The faithful body-servant, following his usual most trusty method, gave way to the most injurious suspicions of the man of law, injurious mainly because they were all correct. He never voluntarily allowed the parchment-faced thief to be alone with the master or the master's papers, contriving at all turns to obtain some secondary employment which would keep him within reach of deed-boxes, clasped ledgers, and the like, whithersoever they wandered, and even going so far as to request the favour of being left on the spot to look after things, alleging his aversion to foreign travel as the sole reason for this request. This application was refused by Charles, but with so much genuine compliment that Mottram's soul was touched deeply, and he solemnly wished he were cut in halves, that the eye part might stay in England and the feet part go with the

master to do his bidding abroad. It is useless to say that this or that particular move on Grogram's part aroused or justified these suspicions, for the whole thing looked suspicious, and Mr. Mottram soundly concluded that it was impossible for human nature to be so mixed up in other people's money matters without stealing. But there was one incident which sealed Mr. Mottram's prejudices for ever against the unconscious Grogram, and the knowledge of that incident made him feel uncomfortable for years, as one might feel in presence of a shell with the fuse still smoking a little. As nothing ever came of it, however, for years, the recollection became familiar and less painful, and we believe that the worthy second in this secret business went down to the grave ignorant of its real meaning. When poor Sarah was dead, Miss Bethia Gibbins bethought her of the simpler portion of her heavy, double charge, and forgetting the precise instructions given by her dead friend, she imagined that the few pencilled words were addressed to the husband. She further concluded, in her highly rigidly-proper mind, that those words were of suitable rebuke, and as Mr. Charles was still insensible when she left for Arlton, and as, besides, she was only rather a timid person for one of such severe morality, she was rather glad than otherwise that she would be exempted from the painful necessity of giving the note into his own hands, and accordingly she placed it with a palpitating heart in the first book she found on the library table that looked as though the master was in the habit of inspecting it. This happened to be Mr. Charles's private ledger, where there were found jumbled together many strange and incongruous entries—wherein also, for that very reason, Mr. Grogram's researches were most indefatigable. Mottram was aloft in the library nailing leathern curtains across the bookshelves, but had become so skilful at his task that he could go on hammering just as well when his back was turned and his eye was busy with his suspected fellow-labourer below, and that same very interesting MS. volume. The beguiled Grogram, forming rash deductions from the incessant hammering, did not even take the trouble of looking round as he quickly pocketed the note directed to Nathaniel Drake, Esq.

It was with no result that Mr. Mottram left off hammering.

then, and very often in after days left off whatever he might happen to be doing, to consider the bearings of that mysterious letter, such as—Who wrote it? To whom? What about; and, above all, to what purpose was the sly lawyer intending to apply it? The whole mystery was a waif and stray on the sea of Mr. Mottram's life, until oblivion swallowed it from his eager gaze for ever. We may, however, take this opportunity of saying that after many consultations with *himself*, Mr. G. decided to enclose the letter with the seal unbroken, to its proper destination, accompanied by the following business-like letter.

“SIR,—

“I take the liberty of forwarding to your address, a letter which I found amongst Mr. Barton's papers, after his departure from England. As it is not in his hand-writing, I conceived that it was not necessary to consult with him as to its disposal. The position in which I found the letter leads me to entertain a fear that it was supposed to contain some testamentary or other document, prejudicial to the interests of the party secreting (whoever that might be), and that, but for the penalties of felony, it would have been destroyed—such was the care manifest in its concealment. May I be allowed to suggest, as a matter of business, that I should know the contents of this document; and, as a matter of old friendship, may I suggest to you how desirable it might be (and indeed only fair) that you should buy my silence, or at any rate make some acknowledgment for the risk I run in betraying another's secrets. Trusting to your undoubted sagacity to see the thing in its proper light, and in memory of the services I was enabled to render you in your early days of practice, I remain

“Your affectionate friend,

“JABEZ GROGRAM.”

To which, perhaps, we may as well subjoin the reply of our friend Nathaniel :—

“MR. GROGRAM,—

“I only remember one piece of intended good service you ever did me, and that was (as I then thought and think still) the giving me of some very bad advice for a lawyer, though very good in all matters not strictly professional. Allow me to repay you by returning the advice, after a loan of more than ten years, none the worse for use—good as new—‘Mind your own business!’

“N. D.”

And thus the shell exploded when Mr. Mottram was far

away on the stormy bosom of the Gulf of Venice. It hurt no one ; it seemed to answer no end whatever, good or bad.*

The travellers were gone ; the house was all but closed entirely ; the old air of desolation had returned ; and men began to wag their heads as they passed by, as if they "could an they would" tell a story of ghostly horror, to account for the melancholy aspect of Mylden Place. But the only appearance of a ghost was Mr. Grogram in the flesh—more shadowy, more soft-footed, more sly, more mysterious, more sensibly furnished with talons, under the soft velvety cushion of his friendly grasp of the hand. And at Arlton the old routine of Mr. Barton's life was little altered by the presence of the lovely babe and her proud guardian, Bethia Gibbins. The philanthropic zeal of Mr. Barton was only heightened into a sacred passion now, by the cruel repulse he had encountered in his last appeal to Charles. We have said that he did not despair ; for he had mighty reserves of hope on which, when most dejected, he could calmly rely—so that relief was given to his anxiety, whether the desire of his whole life was to be granted or withheld. Only at long intervals did he hear from his absent son for several years, and there was little when his letters did come on which either his love or his hope could thrive. Twice during the childhood of Lilian did Charles pay a hurried visit to his father's house. He seemed to be profoundly moved as he lifted to his lips

* The letter, of which Mr. Drake has just favoured the Author with a copy, with the view of clearing up any supposed mystery, was as follows :—

"MY MORE THAN FATHER,—

"I feel that I am going—fast and far away. I want to leave one solemn charge with you. Oh, take my Charles from drink, or keep my babe from Charles. And yet, believe me, I do love him with all my heart and soul ; and I will not believe that his dear heart shall never more be mine. God pity him ; and, dearest father, will you not help him ?

"YOUR DYING SARAH."

It is only necessary to say that Mr. Drake could not see any chance of helping him, but he gladly showed him this letter at a time when he needed no help from man.

the fair image of his lost wife ; but the emotion was rather of terror than peace—of shame more than of fatherly pride. When she had reached the age of sixteen he came, and for a time was willing that his wanderings should be considered over : and, indeed, he needed rest of some sort. Dissipation of mind as well as of body was telling fearfully upon him ; and none who saw the bowed and tottering stranger with the comparatively straight and portly Mr. Barton, would have supposed them father and son. As he pressed the graceful Lily to his embrace, a new and overwhelming impression fell upon him. The likeness to that Sarah who in years long gone had refreshed and soothed his chafed spirit, was complete ; and he felt more as a suppliant once again for woman's love, than as a father receiving the love that was his due. The impression was mutual. Lily was strangely excited by the affecting rapture with which the pale, sin-wearied father listened to her lightest whisper, and gazed on her every movement. She had known nothing but love from infancy, but she had never known such love as this. The romance of girlhood sprang into luxuriant maturity, and it bore, as it were, graftings from another stem—the sweet buds of filial love.

To separate these two any longer would have been a violation of natural sentiment ; and, in Mr. Barton's judgment, everything was to be hoped for by the genial influence of one so innocent and so rich in loving qualities. No objection, then, was offered for a moment to the plan which Charles proposed, that Lily should return with him to the Continent—first of all to Paris, and then to Florence—for at least two years. In Paris he had formed a large circle of acquaintance, and, in conjunction with his friend, Colonel Risque, he was privy to the unsettled politics of the time, and had greatly added to the burdens of an overtasked constitution by his vehement participation in the party struggles of the capital of France, now fast approaching to their old crisis of revolution. To the members of that highly-polished society in which he had recently moved, he introduced the peerless beauty of his daughter ; but he could not forget, under the present display of elegant and refined respect for the English

maiden, how different, how menacing, how pregnant with danger, were the lax manners in which, until he felt that he had a daughter to lose, he had borne an ignoble but conspicuous part.

He hastened to the South—to the city of the illustrious Medici. Oh, beautiful Florence! beautiful in decay, beautiful for thy soft, voluptuous, summer clime! most beautiful of all for thy storied relics of an age of brief and fruitful glory! There was the miniature of a rich man's life on earth; here the picture of the struggles which so often end in the discomfiture of the best-founded hopes and promises of the rich man's life. Surely nature's own abundant provision for all non-criminal, sensuous enjoyment should suffice; but, ah! it is not so. He who has debauched his sensual appetites until they have gained a wanton mastery over reason and religion, too—drinks in with each breath of that balmy air fresh appetite for sensual sin. Charles revelled in the delicious climate, and hardly less in the exciting, touching story which every step renewed with increasing pathos; but his whole nature was too dead by long indulgence to answer or adopt the thrilling self-rebuke which Lorenzo spoke, as if to shake from his own great powers the luxurious sloth which opulence, and art, and balmy breezes fostered but too pleasantly:—

“ Rise from thy trance, my slumbering genius, rise,
That shrouds from Truth's pure beams thy torpid eyes!
Awake, and see, since Reason gave the rein
To low desire, thy every work how vain!
Ah, think how false that bliss the mind explores
In futile honours or unbounded stores;
How poor the bait that would thy steps decoy
To sensual pleasure and unmeaning joy!
Rouse all thy powers, for better use designed,
And know thy native dignity of mind;
Not for low aims and mortal triumphs given;
Its means, exertion, and its object, heaven.

* * * * *

Ah! think, how fair thy better hopes had sped—
Thy widely-erring steps—had Reason led!
Think, if thy time a nobler use had known,
Ere this the glorious prize had been thine own!

Kind to thyself, thy clear discerning will
 Had wisely learned to sever good from ill ;
 Thy springtide hours consumed in vain delight,
 Shall the same follies close thy wintry night ?

* * * * *

At length, thy long-lost liberty regain ;
 Tear the strong tie, and break the inglorious chain.
 Freed from false hopes, assume thy native powers,
 And give to Reason's rule thy future hours ;
 To her dominion yield thy trusting soul,
 And bend thy wishes to her strong control.”*

There was one portion of this counsel which Charles did adopt ; but it was not with a view to self-reform, but was rather a perversion of the advice to the delicate task of counteracting in Lilian's mind the evident effect of the gorgeous ritual of the Roman Catholic church, and the still more powerful impression produced upon her sensitive nature by the habitual devoutness and self-denial of many whom she came to know and love while resident abroad. Charles had never known the value of true religion, which is tantamount to saying that he had never been a religious man ; but while satiated on the one hand with what he called the dull mystic doctrines of the Protestant faith, he was afraid of the monster superstition which had settled down with a hold that no revolution of governments or states, of opinions and theories, could even shake. He trembled at its insidious and perilous influences, and in the violence of his zeal to counteract all its possible charms in the mind of his daughter, he sapped the very life of her young faith in the healthful creed of her early English education. It was but a temporary eclipse which passed over her religious sentiment, and it certainly answered the immediate views of her father ; but it was not likely that the self-asserting beauty and Divine majesty of the Gospel could be effectually met in so pure a soul by any arguments whatever, from one whose daily sin gave to his lesson a living lie, and transformed his beautiful metaphysical religion into a mere crooked image of some holy evangelic truth. The knowledge that her father was unworthy of her reverence did not lessen

* Roscoe's translation.

her love, but brought out all its fulness at the same time. This knowledge took so much from the speciousness of his natural and common-sense religion, that the impression was far from lasting. A much better preservative against the fascinations of Popery was at hand, if the jealous father could only have borne the admission of its powerful influence.

Henry Wilton, then sojourning in the fair city, was of delicate health at the time, but of noble and attractive presence. His air was that of a man whom scholarship has refined into a gentleman, and no more. Where scholarship ended, Divine love had taken up the work of moulding and exalting every feature of his character; and every action, every word, every tone of voice, was in some strange way different from those of all, even good men, whom Lily had known. There was a growth beneath this bright exterior which she could not then see. She could only look, as she listened wonderingly to the words which touched the commonest themes of earthly interest with the tints of a higher life, fired by the flame which burned into her heart with all the power of earthly, and all the steady uncorrupted fervour of some other than mere earthly passion.

But Charles Barton would not hear of such a thing; he could not bear to look on the faint beginnings of a love which would endanger, perhaps displace, himself. He affected to be offended at the presumption of the unmonied adventurer; and flung out the cruel reproach that the young clergyman had taken mean advantage of the generous courtesy ever cherished between Englishmen abroad, to palm himself and his beggarly prospects on an innocent, fanciful girl, whom he knew to be an heiress. But this was all pretence. With all his suicidal folly, Charles was not so absurd as to doubt that an alliance with one so excellent and learned was well worth the noblest fortune the mere wealth-monger could offer. It was indeed this very excellence—so painful, so mortifying by contrast—which shut him up in the unjust resolve to crush the springing hopes of two young hearts. How could he bear the nearness of one who reminded him so strongly of *himself*, in all but those very points which had led to his own ruin? It was the very certainty that this man would

make his Lily happy and wise for ever, that proved so revolting to him at the time. His very dreams lacerated his proud and fallen spirit ; for he thought how, in the Judgment, Lily and Henry would be locked in an embrace so pure, so loving, that it scarcely needed to have been broken by death, for renewal through eternity ; while he, standing afar off, felt eternity between himself and the being he had driven headlong, by his folly, to the grave. He could not bear the contrast. His mind was diseased—mad, if you will ; and the thought that he should one day lose that child's love, in connection with the fearful knowledge that he deserved to lose it now, broke in upon his slumbers like a billow from the lake of fire. He could not bear that his child should have so high a standard by her side, from which she might measure his own shameful shortcomings. True, she would be safe ; but self, self ! Oh ! did he discover now, for the first time, that self was indeed the hideous idol of which he was the cruel priest ? Pity for his child, lingering conscience, reviving tenderness and the sense of justice, the harrowing remembrances of another's love, the loud death-cry still pealing through distraught memory—all were clamorous ; but pride—selfish, *bloated* pride—smothered all remonstrance from within, and from without, and from above.

He instantly removed with his daughter to other scenes in Italy—the treasure-house of the great Past and the epitome of all change, all mortal glory, all human passion, all world-history. The young clergyman returned to England, and entered at once upon those duties, in the beneficent discharge of which we have already met him in the town of Arlton.



BOOK VII:
AFTER MANY DAYS.

“What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can: What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul; that struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels, make essay!
Bow, stubborn knees! and heart, with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe,
All may be well.”

HAMLET.



Book Seventh.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

HOME ONCE MORE.

ABOUT three months before the commencement of our memoir, Charles had resolved on returning to England, partly because his father's desire to see them both had been very urgently repeated of late, but principally because his own life was sinking into the socket ; and though he scarcely cared about the approaching death which, in former years, had been so terrible a theme for meditation—he was anxious that his Lily should be at home among the few friends towards whom her young heart turned in her now frequent distresses.

They arrived at Arlton to find great change on every hand—but to show still greater change in themselves. The frail girl, who had gone away beneath the doubtful shelter of a sickly, gloomy parent, returned full of health, an anxious, prudent, careful, faithful, loving nurse, to whom the once robust man looked up for help and comfort at every turn.

The aged father was at first unspeakably afflicted to behold the wreck, which men called his only son. But when in a few days he found that the old obstinacy of pride—that obstinacy which had spurned his counsel, and even ridden down his love into the dust—was undergoing some change, he began to take comfort, and even to rejoice, that so severe a visitation should have befallen one whom he had vainly tried to save, but who appeared now to be altogether in the hands of Him who had ever yet, in his experience, made chastise-

ment a means of peace. A strange longing took possession of Charles's mind to revisit, and even to inhabit the old house at Mylden—and the sweet nurse, prophesying good things, secretly rejoiced that she was going to the scene of her mother's earthly happiness (alas ! she knew not, even now, how small, how brief, that happy lot had been), and she felt that only a blessed charm could linger round a place where a mother so saintly and so loving as she heard even the bereaved husband describe, had lived and meekly died.

Lily had one brief, casual interview with Henry, but a sense of propriety restrained on both sides, while beyond the clear, harsh mandate of her father, there was the far more effectual and coercive reason of his all-absorbing sorrow, to check the impulse of her affectionate memory of Henry Wilton—and overhanging every thought, every stolen, pensive hour, there was the consciousness that she was unmeet for one so heavenly in his aspirations, and in the tenor of his daily life. She could hardly bear the cruel bar between them—but she saw it, and she knew its strength. His God was not hers. Her faith had been marred, and the holier sentiments of religion had been rudely stifled for a time ; and though, like trodden violets, they rose again, sweeter, lovelier, they needed spring showers from on high, before she could gather a wreath for her beloved and dearly loving friend.

There was no symptom of danger in Mr. Barton's case. Indeed, he was in sound, general health, but greatly enfeebled, and even partly lame through a slight paralytic stroke ; and so they parted in the declining summer days, with no fear of its being their final separation. Mr. Barton, however, naturally thought that such might be the case ; and he earnestly enjoined on both Charles and Lilian, that, if possible, they should meet again on earth ; if Charles was worse, a messenger was to ride off instantly, and if alive, Mr. Barton said over and over again, he would hasten at once to embrace his son, even if the effort should prove his own death too. Charles well knew the object of this intense anxiety to be with him when his hour should come, and though his heart relented, and was sorely moved, his pride kept silence, and he knew, besides, *that unless he relinquished the now indispensable stimulant,*

his father would have no ground for real comfort, or even hope ; and he could not, would not, dare not, give up the very elixir of his waning life, poisonous though he now well knew it to be.

There was all the charm of novelty, and all the deeper fascination of tenderest associations in this visit of Lily to the home of her birth. To Charles, also, there was some singular attraction. He could not speed fast enough on wings of steam, and he knew no rest for a moment, till he stood once again in the unaltered chamber where the dear daughter and the dear stricken mother had nestled to each other's hearts so holily on that night of shame and mortal sin.

Once the faithful Lily had ventured to inquire from her father, whether he did not think that so much brandy did him harm—for she had never tasted it—so early insensed had she been with the belief that it was rank poison ; but the mingled fury and heart-breaking melancholy of that reproaching glance, abashed and silenced her feeble remonstrance. Could she but wean him ! Could she but so ravish him with the fulness of her ardent love ! Could she, by sleepless watching, beguile the weary waking hours of the pitiable sufferer !—oh, could she do anything really to lessen the demon's hold upon him,—she would cheerfully do it ; but she knew the powerlessness of human speech. That one black look, revealing, as it did, the lineaments of the same demon which flashed forth upon the astounded wife in years gone by—told her that words, all words, were but as oil upon the flame. She then knew her duty ; her sphere was limited, because her power was signally so. With all the lighter heart, then, did she devote herself to the laborious task of soothing every passing pang of mind or body, and the bright days and lengthening nights found her ever sprightly, full of loving devices for the relief and amusement of her dying father. Had she known a charm of Heaven's own prescription, she would have plied that too ; but her ear was untaught, unmusical for the loftier melodies of the truth in love ; and her heart, in its very redundancy of animal spirits and purest human affection, seemed almost independent of such aid as religion proposes to grant to the weary and heavy laden

amongst the children of men. Notwithstanding all her liveliness, there was great anguish in her heart, for in spite of all her care, and skill, and love, not only was death hastening on, but the cloud of a lifetime seemed to deepen round the approaching doom. Was it a cloud gathering lightnings in its bosom, which hereafter would tear it asunder? We shall see.

CHAPTER II

"AIRS FROM HEAVEN."

THE sweet autumnal night had fallen, and the big moon with more than summer glory shone down upon the dusky woods, and kissed her trembling image on the leaping brook. The hum of labour and of traffic was dying slowly on the ear, and the distant bark of house-dog, borne sadly on the evening air, was answered by the sullen guns proclaiming that the hour of rest and of temptation was near at hand. The suffering father gazed from within upon the peaceful landscape till his spirit seemed to catch the softened moonlight tint—and his pains were forgotten or lulled by the fascination of the gentle hour. The slight fever which generally marked the abatement of his graver ailments, made him long to taste the cooling breeze. Lilian, who was sitting hand in hand with her father, soon acquiesced in his desire for a stroll in the dry paths of the little park. The air was mild, and the night was too tempting to resist; and so with filial, almost with motherly care, she muffled up the invalid; and then with wifely prudence muffled up herself. For some time they paced the glittering path in silence, she in partial sorrow, for on that day she had perceived a change in her father's symptoms, and thought there was some new grief pressing on his mind. She was too dutiful and delicate to press the anxious question that had so often risen to her lips that day, and mentally resolved that if she found her father sinking down into his old lassitude and melancholy—she would not be smitten; she would rally him with the playfulness of love;

she would sing away the sorrow which she thought could have no plea for such excess, and with an amiable tact cheat her parent of his much-nursed gloom.

"Are thoughts cheap or dear to-night, father, for I declare I am in great want, and they seem scarce with you; or are they soaring away from poor me, and mine, and earth, in dreamy unison with this enchanting, heavenly night?"

"I had a strange vivid dream last night, my Lily, and that was the spell upon my thoughts just now; it has haunted me all day, and now, and here with you by my side, I seem to dream it all again, and I have a feeling that it is coming true, whatever it may bode. The scene was just like this at least, and you and I were somehow there. I cannot have mistaken—the figure—the white dress—the quick light step, and the face too. Look at me, Lily—ah, yes it is the same, but even paler than yours, I think, and the other—he was young, but in the swift dream-time he grew old—it was myself—I fear, and yet I would gladly think it was, if all the dream should be as true as part of it in its application to my life. It could be no other—for you looked so wistful, and your search was diligent and eager as love could make it—you sought the stranger, and who could that stranger be unless it was the poor decrepit father who leans the whole burden of his wasting life upon you. I would not be your all, but you are all I have on earth—I had two once, and each seemed my all—but one is with the blest I know"—(and the trembling father bowed his head to weep).

"Then father, dear, we too are among the blest—I, that I even seem an angel tending you, and you, that you have all here, and yet another all in Heaven."

"All? Yes, all in Heaven but I."

"Now listen to me, father," said Lilian, gaily, for she dreaded these sad memories—thought they did lead the thoughts to heaven—"I'll show you what a good angelic girl I am. Tell me your dream, and I'll be your Joseph. Mind, if it is friendly, that doubtful person will turn out to be no one in the world but you; if bad and boding, woe to somebody unknown—to everybody, anybody but the dear old dreamer—so now I'm ready when you like."

worth the telling.

"Your prophet's greatly flattered, I do declare."

"Ah, wicked, you have me there, but really it will be the sadness I have felt all day ; and yet I would rat—besides, I don't believe in dreams."

"Oh, but I do if they're good, and even if they're bad, they come true by contraries ; but I've a little theory of my own."

"Let me have the theory then, it may help me to shape a dream—for dreams are at the best fantastic thoughts."

"The theory, oh, no ; that would be hardly fair. You steal my prophet's wand ? No. Give me a nice puzzle, and I promise you a right old-fashioned oracle—decided, or open and dubious, as may suit best ; at all very satisfactory."

"Well, let us sit. I will tell the dream here, and you wait the response indoors, for it will soon be too chilly both outside."

"You promise to make the dream short, and I'll take care to make the meaning sweet."

"Don't laugh at me, dearest ; I'm afraid you'll tell me very maudlin ; the sentiment of the thing suits the scene."

and princely mansion, like a well-set gem, large and beautiful, and filled with joyous spirits. I soon learned that the owner, the heir once and owner now, was not among them ; that in his earlier years he had left all, to wander through the world ; to toil, perhaps, or perhaps to fight. Tidings reached the forsaken home year by year, and each year brought more sadness to the longing hearts of all who loved him there. Most of all they sorrowed, when they feared that they should see his face no more ; because he had all but forgotten and had quite renounced the claims and ties of home. In my dream, it seemed that new tidings had but just arrived—tidings that had filled all hearts with joy, and turned their mourning to a festival. The word had reached them that at length his steps were homeward bound, and he was near at hand. Now I saw that valley skirted and closed in by one vast dense forest. It hung threateningly and frowned upon the secluded home, and yet the dwellers of the vale felt no terror ; for they had never felt a wish to tempt its gloom. And so they knew not what meant those cries of rage, and fear, and agony, that often made the wild wood ring, and startled the echoes through the vale. Hope wakened in the house—hope waited on the threshold—hope tried to peer into the forest depths—hope drew near to its boundary line, seeking to descry and ready to give welcome to the coming wanderer.

“My thoughts took wing above, not through the dense foliage of the forest, and I was with the wanderer. He knew only too well the perils and the sufferings of that primeval forest ; but he only knew them partially—the way by which he had so swiftly fled from home was comparatively a beaten track—though filled with pitfalls and beset by savage beasts. He knew, and had felt enough to dread the effort of return. To his faint heart it had seemed an impenetrable barrier between him and his father’s house ; until the carking, gnawing anguish of his many wounds, drove out all fear, and stung him to a dying effort. * * * I lost myself—I lost the wanderer. I thought, I felt that it was I who had thus girt up my loins to pierce and pass the forest dangers. Through brake and thicket my firm foot crushed its way—heedless and still onward in the night watch, and in the brief daylight. But the way was long, and

I was weary. The hardship grew at every step ; my heart grew sick. I panted, groaned, and cursed my evil fate, and then I paused and turned. There lay the track which I had made with so much pain, all around the forest shades were deepening. Not far behind me were pursuing voices. But an hour before, these voices had been harsh and full of dreadful omen ; but now they fell like distant convent bells upon the pilgrim's ear. Should I yield to go back ? One step I took, but then my shame, my wounds, my woe, all returned ; I would not be turned back ;—to go where those inviting voices called me, I knew was certain death ; to turn again to home might also bring me to destruction ; but my set face would tell even in death, of love, and resistance, and effort.

“ I paused no more ; but with new strength I took my way through knotty, thorny, dangling branches—slipped upon the slimy serpents in my path, but bruised them, killed them even as I slipped. And now I recognized the tokens of my nearness to safety and to home, as the woodman by his craft can tell his compass by the moss upon the bark. I knew that I was near. I was weak no longer ; I leaped and ran in triumph. All too soon—for there, in dens hard by, there had been lurking many a day, old foes who had heard my resolve, who had peeped in upon the sweet attractions of my home ; and knowing whence I came, they felt assured that I would not turn back from such a home. Unguardedly I drew near. They leaped upon me, threw me, and made as they would slay me ; but they bound my hands and feet, and bound me to a tree of rank and poisonous stench, and left me almost in sight of home, to die by slow degrees. Foul, ravening, obscene beasts, of every size and shape, prowled round my fettered limbs—maddening each other to the fatal gorge. They leaped upon me, dug their ragged fangs into my flesh ; maimed me afresh, and tore, with gnashing teeth, my old wounds open ; but I could not die. Thirst, the unquenchable fire, consumed me ; sleepless fear drained my remaining strength. I could not strive nor cry ; my limbs were chill and numb ; my lips were glued together, and I prayed for death. Oh, it shakes me now with terror ! But I lost my identity with the wanderer ; I seemed to be a witness rather

than a sufferer ; and my thoughts rose lark-like from the gloomy wood into the sweet morning sky. I felt as if I knew all that was passing in the circle of the happy valley, and that I could read the character of each loving, hoping heart.

Three sisters dwelt from earliest infancy in amity at home ; and, as one might judge from their undistinguishable joy, so full, so sisterly, they felt an equal love for the expected brother. And yet there grew upon my thought a striking difference between them. The eldest had, at all times, and in spite of all rumours, still relied upon the countless charms of such a home as theirs, and her love was full of household cares for his reception. The second was less confident ; she was restless, fearful, impatient, and she went forth to meet her brother. The third was anxious, too, but confident and resolute, and she went forth to seek him. To this young sister, to this loving maiden, in her modesty and great anxiety, no help, no hint, no comfort was unwelcome. She would venture all she might ; and she remembered that there was something like an opening into the forbidden and uncoveted forest glade ; and she remembered that it was close to the old grey cross, which marked the boundary of their sanctioned liberty and peace—the altar where the household often brought their vows, and where she was wont to worship in the morning and in the evening-tide. There she went again to pray ; and as she kneeled in lowly reverence, and opened all her heart, a brother's name was syllabled by quivering lips. It fell as if the heavens above had echoed it, it fell upon the brother's dying sense ; it revived his sinking life, and the long-drawn sigh responded to the name he bore. The prayer died upon the maiden's lips. It was ended—for in very act of utterance it had found an answer. She turned, and saw the bound and wounded man. In that ghastly and disfigured face she could not trace the lineaments of her lost one, but she loosed the thongs which bound and galled him ; bade him lean upon the old grey altar, and, as she laved his dry lips and burning brow, and washed away the blood and mire, she recognized each feature of the dear one's face, she knew him in his rags and deadly paleness, and his many wounds ; it was, indeed, her brother. One fond embrace, one brief, heart-spoken

prayer, and blessing to the name of God—and then she led him to his home.

"I awoke with violent pain, for I shook with terror. In all the strife and suffering, I was the wanderer ; but it seemed as if the deliverance had been granted to another."

The day-long sadness was again upon the speaker ; and in the still moments that ensued, the lovely listener seemed as if the tale had overshadowed her gay mood. She was going over the strange dream, step by step, she was giving up her heart in sympathy with the forlorn prodigal, and rehearsing the excitement of the rescue. The whole of the sick man's fancy stayed with her like a sun picture, and each moment only developed and verified the picture. But the elder, and, in such a case, the less sensitive mind, dwelt only a moment on the details of the dream ; it could only linger with dread upon the mystery, which touched so closely his own experience, and seemed to bear a lesson to himself alone.

The oracle was silent, perhaps, as becoming in a priestess, she was entranced ; and reverently enough the dreamer appeared to be waiting. His thoughts, however, were just then far enough from such proper homage to the lovely priestess ; while she, to her great confusion be it spoken, was wandering far enough away from the pity-needing, trembling being beside her. She was quite disposed to identify herself with so good an angel as that youngest sister ; but, then, she had no brother. Well, who was it, then ? But her reverie was broken by that mournful tone, which never failed to rout the fancy of the moment, however clear and sweet.

"Come, now, Lily, I have done my part ; I wait for yours. Has this dream a meaning ; and for me ?"

"To business, then, as the black doves of old Dodona's oak groves might have said by way of prologue to their sage responses. I'm glad you've put the question in the way you have ; for now I can give you a real woman's answer. In the first place, the dream has no meaning at all ; and, in the second place, it cannot mean anything about either you or me. The man was quite young, you see."

"Did I say he was young, my dear ?"

"Well, not exactly, perhaps ; but you made me fancy him

much younger than you ; and then I'm sure I'm not the young angel of a lady, for she was so beautiful."

"I forgot that I had said that, dear. I think you are going to be Daniel, after all ; telling the dream your own way before you explain."

"At any rate, she was very, very pious. You did say that, now. I hope, I pray as well as others, quite as sincerely, and quite as often ; yes, better than others, for I pray for you ; others have so many to love, that their thoughts are 'distracted when they pray. I have only you to think of—and I cannot but be very fervent when I seek Heaven's goodness for a father who has been so dear to me, and who now needs so much kindness, both from me and Heaven ; but then you know, papa, I don't make a practice of going at twilight, at either end of the day, to old grey stone altars at the corners of dreadful woods. You have trained me too well to the practice of a rational and sober religion, ever to find me mumbling collects like a Puseyite, or Latin like a Catholic. So I judge that you were flurried a little, and made a very excusable mistake, considering you were asleep, in the features of both the individuals. It's quite plain to me, that if the dream belongs to you at all, only the first part can be true ; for here you are at home, in a very substantial and respectable house, in a very fertile valley, and plenty of wood on every side, and poor tender-footed Lily has not to roam up and down in distress to go and seek you. What would you have more ? The lady does not fit, and I am certain the gentleman was—oh, let me see—twenty years younger than you. What would you have more, I ask ?"

"The theory, to be sure—your theory ; I was forgetting."

"To be sure, papa, and this is it. Perhaps it will help us a little. Dreams, no doubt, tell a great deal of truth and wisdom, too, if we could only get at it. They represent not only the events but the thoughts of the day, and are occasionally of use to the wakeful in unmasking the real character of the sleeper. Sometimes they serve a good end, though not after the pleasantest fashion, by ransacking the lumber of the past, and bringing neglected experience to the light. *This dream of yours, for instance, dear father, does it not bring to*

mind the many perils you have passed through, and the heavy disappointments you have known ; or perchance it is a miniature of your whole life, true to the present hour, which finds you at home in a little Paradise, with Lily for an angel to soothe and dress the wounds of life's rough usage."

"Bless you, then, for as good an angel as ever walked in human form and flesh ; and thank you for a very wise little prophet. I will believe you are right ; you have, indeed, soothed many of my wounds ; God grant they may all and soon be healed."

"Only let me know them all—I'll answer for their cure ; and I rather fancy that between us three, Milly, me, and the Doctor, we shall yet see you and health make up your quarrel, and be good friends again."

"But the mind, Lily ; the memory faithful only to the grief and sin of the past."

"Oh, I forgot that ; never fear, old Drayton's a capital preacher, and I'll make him come and talk you into a good humour with yourself, as soon as you get a little stronger. So for indoors, and new dreams. * * * Just look, papa. How glorious the night ! This beats your dream, I know—not quite such a grand mansion, but a lovelier, larger valley, I'll be bound ; ay, and quite as happy, if you would only think so."

"Happy ? dear, you forget that in the dream all the dwellers in the vale were always happy."

"What ! the poor sister, who had to go out and seek a lost brother and found him all in rags ? No. I'll match my reality with your fancy. I do not dislike the flights of fancy. I often feel borne high up, so that I can see a long way into the past, and (as the poet says of the eagle,) 'greet the yet unrisen sun ;' even now, I could believe that chaste, soft light was my mother's smile falling on us as we stand ; on you to comfort you, and on me, father, because I help to realize her wish. Do I not comfort you ?"

"Unutterable thanks, my daughter, for all your sweet love, and patient helping. Let us go in."

CHAPTER III.

“BLASTS FROM HELL.”

A night which ensued on this singular conversation between Charles and his beloved child, was spent by both hearts in restless excitement. Lily endeavoured hour after hour to draw her from the dream of her father some clue to his actual state of mind, for, as she had said, there was reason in placing confidence in dreams, to a certain extent; and though she had scarcely felt courage enough to suggest that this vision of the future might be only a pictorial and condensed view of the workings of the father's mind, she could not control her feelings when she came to retrace the successive steps of the awful history, and, in the attempt to extract the hidden meaning, and to realize the indicated fulfilment, she was hurried to the quick of her young heart, by the partial knowledge and her dreadful surmise of the suffering through which he had already dragged her father—appalled by the threatening dangers which, to one so timid, seemed insurmountable, and then, fired with all the enthusiasm of hope—the hope that she herself should accomplish, or be permitted to witness, the deliverance of a dying father from the bondage of the Prince of Darkness. One misgiving, however, would cling coldly on her expanding hopefulness. She was well able to interpret the earlier parts of the vision. She recognized in the palace home, not so much that earthly home, to which at first she had so playfully referred as the innocent and blissful life which had been so cruelly marred by wanderings from virtue, and, above all, by the self-enslavement of her father. She could trace in the housewifely sister a strong openness to such charity as was common on every hand—the simplicity which fondled itself amongst the quiet pleasures of a virtuous life, which had never suffered the ruder shocks of temptation, and had grown up in an indolent belief that virtue would triumph in the long run—that all would be right at last. She almost smiled at the complacency, the shrewd and knowing looks of satisfaction with which her old friend, this, for instance, would extend the hand of fellowship to

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any poor sinner, *after* he had forsaken the error of his way ; but her own sympathy, educated as it had been under the constant influence of Mr. Barton's example, was decidedly in favour of that sublimer charity which lays itself out, in all times and seasons, for the salvation of the self-destroyed. There was the anxiety, the impatience, the indefinite but loving effort of the sister who beat the bounds of safety, in the hope that the lost one might hear and follow her voice. But she could carry her interpretation no further. She did not then understand the teaching of that lowly, weeping maiden at the "old grey cross." She could not identify herself with the actual rescue of the forlorn and perishing prisoner in the gloomy woods, and it was with a pang of jealousy and of self-reproach for her inefficiency and ignorance, that she resigned herself to the belief that, by some means or other, her father would even yet be rescued from the horrible meshes of the peril in which he was entangled.

When she entered the chamber of her father, radiant with her new confidence, and with the effort to hide the tell-tale witnesses of her wakeful night, she was surprised to find him up and dressed, and delighted more than surprised with the quiet smile of peace which accompanied the announcement of her father's determination to return at once to Arlton.

"I have been thinking, my dear, that if anything serious should happen to me, it would be so cruel to impose this long journey on my father ; that I would even rather not have him sent for, though he did beseech it so earnestly ; and yet Lily, if he died without seeing me, or if I died, and he were absent, I know that his death would be unhappy ; it would give the lie to his long course of virtue. Ah ! I would not have it so—even I—I will go to him ; he shall see me die ; he shall hear me—what can I tell him ? But I am so near the last, Lily, my dearest one ; I may not live to see him, or to tell—tell him the dream I told you, and say, it brought before me all my foolish, wicked life ; it pained me till it has almost slain me in an agony, by the remembrance of his love and of her—sweet Sarah mine !—but that I was *found at last* ; yes, Lily, tell him that the religion never felt, long neglected—came to me—like itself—to give me peace in

exchange for war—to repay my insults with its promise of forgiveness. Tell him that even for a sinner unto death, I *thought* mercy had been granted.”

“But father, oh let me speak ; I remember well, and even your own religious views confirm me—‘There is a sin unto death.’”—And after a pause she went on—“Can there be even in the good God, a love so great, or so weak, as to pardon unrelinquished sin ? Forgive me, father ; my heart is almost full to breaking ; shall it break with joy that you are safe, or with grief that you go down into the dark—dark grave self-deceived ?”

“Lily, you do not know, child, how you speak. Words are wounds—and from you ? Would you indeed slay me, before my soul is quite secure, and thus terribly avenge your mother ?”

“My mother ?”

“Yes, Lily, *I slew* your mother. Do you now know what it is you speak of, when you say, ‘relinquish’ ? Great God, can I abandon that which not even her dear love, and her sweet life, and thy foreboding frown, could shake and stagger ? No child, I tried to save you from the falsehood of a purgatory hereafter ; but I should have told you, as now I do with almost dying breath, there *is* a purgatory, but it is *here*—on earth, in life—and if God would be merciful, He must not bargain for repentance ; there is no repentance in the hell which now consumes me ; it is remorse, revenge, resentment, rebellion—but not repentance. The demon has sealed me for his own. I felt the heat of his nearing brand for years ; but in your mother’s death-shriek I heard only fiendish laughter. In the scorching fever I felt—I recognized—the pressing of Hell’s irrefragable seal upon my brain. He has me fast. No wisdom—no grace—no heavenly pity is wholly lost on me ; but it only aggravates the torture and the fell power of the one sin, ~~now~~. No, there is no escape. To abstain is to die—to bring on even here the worst of the possible, and even doubtful hereafter, and then to die and dare the last experiment with Fate. But they told me years ago—they tell me still—the whispering breath of fiends falls hot anon on my very heart ; and they tell me my sin is second nature now—that at first it

might be wrong, foolish, even very wicked to drink at all; but now, they say, it can't be helped; it has ceased to be a sin, and either a just God must, or a kind God *need* not forgive it. Lily, sweet blossom, thou art pale and trembling. Dost thou fear, and yet hast never sinned? What, then, think you of me? By drink I slew the being I loved more, far more than God. Drink became thenceforward my appointed Hell. All round I see the fiery wall; I hear the ringing shriek. I feel the flame unquenchable! and repentance—forsaking drink—it is impossible! and if God's pity reaches thus low down, it may well afford to remember my woe as well as my sin, and to save me altogether, for I can neither escape from the suffering nor the sin."

"Oh, unhappy father! why did you shake my faith in those sweet teachings of a Spirit's love and power. They may be false; but alas! that I had my old faith now, and here—false or true—for, as it is, I have no comfort to give—not one word. But I love you. I would bear a part in that sad curse that has fixed its fangs in your heart, father. I would be wretched with you, if that would ease you. I will die with you, poor sufferer, for I feel there is no God; and if there be a hell, it is justly yours—murderer; but still my poor, poor father—and your fate is mine—mine by choice not by crime; we will go together."

"Hush, dear child, your mother is here. I see her. The frown is gathering fast upon her angel-brow, as it never fell on earth—oh, hush! She must not hear the blasphemy which casts away two souls from that outstretched arm—I was wrong Lily—I have nurtured you in falsehood. I know it now—I knew it then—but, oh! they should not have trusted your young heart with mine; and yet they did not, could not know how seared with living flames that heart had come to be. No more, my child; fly from me—seek my father! fly to his bosom, and he will lead you to your mother—curse me, child—forsake me—forswear your cruel father, and God will bless you, and an angel mother guard you then!"

The sweet girl shook and sickened with her unutterable anguish. The great gulf was open at her feet, and both falling in; with one wild cry—"Save him—save me—save

us, Lord!" she fell at her father's feet. Charles trembled with the torment of a spirit doomed—a heart that knows no hope, and yet knows not how to bear and perish. He flew to the decanter, now his only sustenance—his life—and as it had long been, his only substitute for energy, that its long use had stricken dead. It gave him the life of the moment which he sorely needed, and when he had bathed his daughter's brow awhile, he summoned the servants, and retired to hasten the departure, for he felt that the crisis of his being was at hand, and he longed to see his child in safety, away from himself, and with her face set heavenwards as his own was set to hell.

Late on the same evening, he and Lily arrived at the father's house. The untimely hour and the pealing ring roused the aged father from his gentle slumber, and creeping from his bed, he knelt, and cried—"O God, the hour is come! He sends for me to see him die, to give my peace and blessing now as in his hour of birth, and thus I give it. Can I—may I give it now? Lord, I have watched and wearied for the boy, and now he goes before me—whither? Wilt Thou compassionate my sinning child—and with long-suffering heal all his wanderings, now that they are well-nigh over? Lord, thou art full of mercy—plenteous in redemption—redeem my boy, have pity on my Charles. Let thy love effect that change of heart, without which he can never see Thee. *My* love he would not have—he deemed it foolish—but thine? Father in heaven! thy love *is* wisdom, and it is power. Save my child—Immanuel! God with us, in this dread hour—be near to teach and touch and sanctify the heart so far astray, so sinful, so helpless and accursed."—The prayer was interrupted by the servant, who brought the information of Charles's arrival. The meeting between father and son was more deeply affecting than on any similar occasion in former years. Charles felt that he had come to that house to die, and the father, as he pressed him to his arms, was still praying in his heart, that as life had been but death in the making, so death might become through the mercy of God the beginning, the budding, the spring-time of life. The rapid and sudden journey had proved salutary to dear Lily, who with the buoyancy of youth and innocence

soon shook off the dreadful curse which threatened at first to burn like naphtha in her heart, clinging and consuming. Her father remained for the most part solitary and extremely quiet; and yet it seemed to her that it was not the quiet of dejection, nor altogether the result of his continued brandy-drinking. Occasionally she won him both from his solitude and silence, and persuaded him to stroll a little way in the quieter parts of the town, and out into the golden-fringed lanes leading to the suburb villages of Arlton. But the churchyard seemed to be his favourite resort, and when she asked him if there was any particular charm for him there, he replied—"Yes, there is—but it is not a happy charm. In our own graveyard there are so few mounds to excite sadness, and they look so green and tranquil, that one cannot be sad; but here they lie close packed, and the ground above is hard and parched, and one can dwell upon the thought—How few of all who sleep here awoke in heaven! Surely my mother's grave is no fit place for me, her castaway. This, Lily, shall be my burial-place." But Lily would strive by many devices to divert her father's mind from such harsh images of his own character and coming fate. She durst not speak a word that might risk the re-opening of that dreadful gulf, the thought of which still made her sick and dizzy, and which now was closed or hidden.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.

SOME of the ever zealous ladies of the neighbourhood, headed by Miss Gibbins, had deputed themselves to wait on Miss Barton, and to solicit the honour of her presence and presidency at one of the tables, on the interesting occasion of the Anniversary of the "Friends of Home" Club; and the head deputy contrived to insinuate private apologies and special arguments so as to account for the prominence and urgency of her interference in the matter.

"For my own part," she said, "perhaps I ought not to take so much on myself; for you see, dear, I am not a member;

but then I mean to be. Yes, I shall certainly sign this time. I never did take only a very little, so that's not the reason ; but I was always afraid people would suspect that I could not keep myself within proper bounds, without the pledge ; so I never would, dear, because a female in my situation cannot afford to allow the world to speak evil at random, even though she has a twenty years' character and an annuity, besides a good service pension ; but now it's all the fashion for people to subscribe money instead of names ; and discuss liquor laws over their negus ; so as I cannot do much in the money line, I flatter myself my name will make some impression ; at least, it will show other women (who ought to know better) that it *is not* a disreputable thing to sign the pledge. Besides, my dear, you know how *particularly* devoted I am to our venerable establishment, and as the proper party is not on the spot, to receive my veneration (which is a great injury to veneration every way) ; I do the best I can, in my humble way (and people ought to do the best they can, Miss Lily, even if it is a humble way,) to perform everything my church requires ; so last night I took the opportunity of asking our curate (a *particularly* clever and *very* nice young man ; now don't you put a bad construction on it—I can't help, if you do) whether *he* thought there would be a good meeting, a *respectable* meeting ; and he said, that he had no doubt, that if some respectable young lady were to set an example, it would soon spread. I knew he meant me ; for you see, dear, everybody will have me young, in spite of my age ; but he could not, for shame, say so to my face ; so thinking he would not go very wide of the mark, he mentioned *you*. Now, dear, you can hear what the deputation says ; and don't let them influence you against your better judgment and your inclination."

With such an effective pioneer as Miss Gibbins had proved herself, the ladies, in committee (of themselves) deputed, found little opposition ; and Miss Barton received her diploma on the spot, and was authorized to look upon herself as in some sort "the Queen of the Tea Meeting on Wednesday night ;" and as soon as this formal announcement was made at headquarters, Mr. Alfred P. presumptuously purred on her

name, and entered a stupid memorandum, in his rather sparsely-used minute-book, to the effect that "The Water-Lily was in full bloom on the — inst."

Hitherto the deep interest which was inbred in Lilian's heart in relation to the cause of Temperance, had displayed itself in many a still course of active benevolence ; and there were many in the Band of Hope who revered her almost too much to chalk up her name and shout it out on holidays, but who loved her too much also ever to forget "the honey and nuts," moral and material, with which she had encouraged their juvenile vows. She had no *particular* motive for assuming so prominent a post. She knew, indeed, that her spiritual adviser would be there ; but she was too conscious of having followed any advice but his in religious matters, to feel otherwise than uneasy when she saw him in that capacity, and as yet there was no relenting in the manner of her father towards Henry Wilton in the character of a lover. As soon as she had decided on being present, the thought occurred that if she could only persuade her poor father to accompany her, he would certainly be amused, and might be converted ; or, at least, helped in some way or other to shake off his infernal thrall.

In the course of the morning she persuaded him to direct his steps to the Park where the happy concourse was gathered ; and as they wandered from group to group, they felt all the more freedom and pleasure from the fact that few knew them ; and certainly none of the gay multitude were aware that in that shrunken, feeble, melancholy man, was the indirect source of all their peace and pleasure of the hour. As they moved on to the spot where the noise was the loudest and merriest, they became aware that Mr. Barton was a spectator, and in one heart there was a painful echo of the prayers which the old man was offering up to heaven. As the day wore on, Charles grew languid and sickly, and Lily felt that she could not press him to accompany her in the evening. We have seen, however, that Charles was awaiting her at the close of the meeting ; and we have now to say that he had been an unnoticed auditor of nearly the whole proceedings. Perfect silence was maintained on his part till they reached their

home ; then he seemed in haste to tell his daughter that he had been present, and what he thought of all that he had heard.

"Lily, my child, it will be a blessed thing for you, and those of your age, that you need never fall into the snares which have mastered and undone your father. Those men have got a truth—a saving truth, indeed ; but its power is not equal to my case. All that is past for me ; and, besides, they do not even handle their truth as if they thought it could do me good—as if they really knew how terrible is the foe they seek to crush. Surely they have never known this living death ! That poor tinker—why, poor soul, he may have been a drunken fellow—overdone the beer a little ; but what does he know of the hell-rack through which I am fighting my way to the grave ? Then Mr. Talbot—why, what good can he ever do ? Does he think that the show of his own temperate life will be a healing balm on the wounds of the poor drunkard ? I tell you, Lily, if he were a merciful man, he would stay at home, and nurse his virtue quietly. Why, Lily, I tell you, his words, so cool and sweet, are blister—they aggravate and drive to despair : what does he know about the matter ? It is all very fine to praise up Temperance, and the like ; but he might as well read Milton's 'Eden' to the lost in the 'burning marl.' There's that minister of yours, too. I don't know whether he knew I was there listening ; but he could not have cut more cruelly, if he had known."

"Oh ! but, father, he did not know ; he would not have spoken as he did if he had seen you there—I'm sure Mr. Wilton would not."

"Well, well, I don't know ; and what's more, Lily, I don't care—just reach me the brandy. Now, I thought much more of that young Dissenter with the moustache : I believe that man has gone near being scorched, and he speaks like a *scorched* man. But, oh, my God ! was there none of them that had the honesty (for some must have known) to confess that there were cases which they could not reach, for which they knew no remedy, and for which they felt no hope ?"

He sank into momentary absence, and, lifting up a look of love and anguish to his daughter, he said :—

"Oh, Lily! I wish I had not gone. I feel more than ever how hopeless I ought to be; and yet it has moved me, in my weak state, so much, that I can hardly bear to see my father to-night. Bring me word how he is, and I will go to bed."

On her return to the room where her father was, she found him in a fit of violent, passionate weeping; and from her own eyes the drops of sacred sorrow were stealing fast. Scarcely able to speak, she laid her hand on his shoulder; and when he turned, she fell upon his neck and kissed him, murmuring with sob-broken voice:—

"Father, he is going fast—so peaceful, and yet he cannot die without one word from you. He wants to die, and be at peace; but he calls for you—he stretches out his arms to grasp you—and then he says: 'No, no; do not bring my boy—it will be too much for him. Is he not dying, too? Then we shall soon meet—meet again; but how—where?' And then cries for you again, and says: 'One drop of water—only one;' and when I placed the ice to his lip, he said: 'No—I mean one word with Charles—where is he? Can he not come? Will he not? Dare he not?' And then, father, his looks glare with fury; and in his frenzy he cries: 'Oh! what hath torn my Charles—my boy—from Heaven and me?' Will you go to your father, father? Can you speak the word he needs—that blest *viaticum*? Dear, second father, how I love him! Dearest father, must I plead for him with you?"

"Lily, I tell you, I cannot—I know what he wants. I would not mock him with a lie, which he will discover in the first moments of his immortal waking, and I cannot speak this one word; yet I would see him die. Who has a right to be by in such an hour, if not an only son, even though his presence be itself a curse? Help me, dear, and I will go. I will bless him for his long love, so vainly spent; I will try to comfort him, but I will not lie. It could make no difference to him now; and, God knows, I have more of sin to answer than I can ever bear."

CHAPTER V.

THE BLESSING PREVAILS.

THE chamber of death looked more like the vestibule of glory than the entrance to the grave. By the sick man's desire there was a flood of light, and even then his failing sight could only discern the glimmer of the brightness without ; but in the long intervals of his one anxious sorrow he declared that within there was a light more resplendent than summer—the light of heaven flashing through its opening gates—long seen by faith, now changing to eternal sight.

Standing by the bedside, or bending over it, as in holiest attitude of waiting faith, was the young clergyman and his friend, Miss Bethia. Henry Wilton knew that he had come there rather to learn than to teach—to win fresh glimpses, amidst that death-scene, of the truth that was the Light and the Life of the world. But he could not control his grief and indignation (or call it by the gentler name of pity), that so bright a sunset should be crossed with one dark, stormy cloud. He knew now the painful secret of the old man's life. He had long known the private spur to diligence and zeal for others which that old man's love for Charles had furnished, and he almost blamed himself that he had never tried to rescue the unhappy father of his beloved, if only for her sake ; and that this glorious farewell to earth might have been undimmed by a sorrow.

"Is he come?" said Mr. Barton, with his head turned wistfully to the doorway ; "is my boy here?"

"I am here, father ; I have come to see the joy with which a good man can die."

"Say rather, my dear boy, to help an old man to cast off his last care of earth and time into a Saviour's hands, that he may fall asleep in peace. Will you help me thus, Charles?" And he laid his hands upon the shoulders of his son, gazing with his fast failing eyes right through the pallid countenance close to his own. His whole frame shivered as he felt the hot breath of his son, and he cried, "Oh, this is not my son ;—

some spirit of evil, surely, come to torment me for the last time. I *should* remember Charles. He was a darling babe, and we loved him more than all besides ; and when she went and left me, he was a noble healthy boy, fresh with the dew of life ; and he grew in wisdom as in years—grew into a noble presence—a man. But ah, I forgot—the wound ! the poison ! the fell curse !—where is it ? Let me press my lips upon that wound, and suck the poison out. Oh, Charles, I cannot die—I am weary of dying, and yet I cannot loose the cord till I tell, and ask, and hear. Was I wrong, in my thoughtful tenderness, to spare your young heart the blighting knowledge of the curse that rests on you, even to this hour ? I know not, but if wrong, my God hath pardoned me. I feared to tell you all. But now I go away to meet my Alice and my Judge, she shall not witness against me. I have not driven you to despair by telling you of her sin and her dreadful fate. I will not hold back the secret, now that death is upon us both, lest I should be charged at last with not using the power I had. Charles, your mother was the loveliest of all lovely beings, and she was as full of love as loveliness ; we two built our earthly bower as you have done, ‘ all too near the summer edge,’ and when the winter torrent came, it swept our earthly bliss away for ever. Poor Alice ! she was stripped and poor, and shelterless in the pitiless, pelting rain. I would have warmed and comforted ;—I would have shared my riches of faith ; but in her distress, she would not have my scanty comfort. I need not recount the quick-coming shock which spoiled her of her all ;—you have read the record of many child-deaths—your brothers, Charles, and sisters ; little ones torn from the fondest breast that ever pillowed child of man. Alas ! she would not look upwards in her hours of woe. She felt that her strength and healthy joy of life had gone. In oft-recurring moments, the languor of her fierce strife was like death itself, and she flew to wine—to wine, Charles, do you hear ? And it played its fantastic, cruel, murderous trick with her, as it has done with you. She bowed her weak heart, and became its slave, and in a few days—a few weeks, it rose and slew her—dashed her reason from its throne, crumbled her heart’s love to hot ashes, and swept away like

the storm-wind, leaving hopeless wreck behind. She was mad, my Charles ; and for long years she cowered in hideous gloom, and rent the stifling air with shrieks, and howled her frightful curses forth, even at the name of God. My boy, she is gone. Her reason came for the death-hour, and mercy stood by with angel wings, fanning the sinking spark of the life divine and endless. She was forgiven and blest ere the last sleep fell. How dare I tell you ! God forgive—He has forgiven—a father's weakness, if this silence has been one means of helping you down, down so low, so lost, my poor, poor boy."

"But, father, if there was mercy for her, surely there should be twice mercy for her boy. Perhaps I should have been worse had I known all. It is well. I know you did it for the best, but I did not know how great my danger was. Surely there will be *twice mercy for me* ?"

"Alas ! Charles, you do not see that mercy is for the repentant only. To such only is pardon a true good."

"I do repent."

"You do ? then forswear the accursed habit."

"I cannot leave it off, father ; and God knows I cannot—dare not do it."

"Poor perishing one—dost thou not know that God's mercy is infinite, but that a *full hand cannot grasp* that mercy. Empty the heart, Charles, and God will more than fill it."

Charles was voiceless ; but the thick, struggling sobs bespoke the tumult within. What an hour was here ! The dying and the dying ! The father and the son ! The lost weeping all but penitential tears upon the bosom of the saved. Without, the wind wailed mournfully, as if in one long hopeless sigh. Without, the steady rain pattered on the sodden leaves, as if the spirits of the air were tramping up in quick march, to hear the final arguments of love : and within, each heart-pulse grew harder, steadier, and the breath came from heaving chests, as if the closing rush to save, the forlorn hope, were now being led, and all were bound to follow.

"Charles," said the dying father, as he bowed and shrank beneath the presence of impatient death ; "Charles, *why* *lure you not abandon this* ?"

"Because, father, it would kill me ; I should die, and go to hell."

"No, no, my son, not hell ; unsay that word. All, all, is mercy, if you but repent."

"Father, I should die—die horribly ; with demons wrestling for my soul."

"Yes, but 'the Mighty to save' would rout them all, and bear up and off my child ; and then ! O Charles, die with me,—die now ; why seek to live ? Die *horribly* if needs be. Men in days of old, leaped into the fire-pit exultant. What were tortures to them ? In that fire they saw one walking whom they loved and trusted ; and you shall see the Son of man in that fell furnace through which I bid you, in God's name and for your mother's sake, leap now, at once,—fearless, hopeful, joyous,—to freedom, to life, to her, to me,—to God."

"Father, I would, and could die to escape ; but you know not how many thousand deaths would come to me in one. You die blessed of angels and of God—blessed by all who loved you here."

"Except by my son !" he interrupted, with startling cry.

"Blessed above all by me, I tell you father, for all your faithful tenderness and care. To die like you, indeed, would be the first sweet, calm rest I had known for years ; but I know well the fiendish clamours that will hoot *me* into the grave and pursue me to hell. I cannot thus die. Less I would endure and dare ;—but, O my father, this I cannot do."

And yet his fevered eye was set, intensely peering into and through the fearful vision he had conjured up. He saw indeed "one like unto the Son of man" amidst the flames. Did he think the Saviour frowned, or smiled and beckoned him ? Did he hear a voice saying to him, "On you that second death you dread, shall have no power" ? One voice he did hear ; it seemed to come from behind and beyond the fiery vault ; it was the dying parent's sinking, deepening voice, bidding him to dare and die.

"Die, Charles, that you may live ! Die horribly, that you may live the sooner—and live for ever."

"O must I die? Must this indeed be the seal and sacrifice?"

"Die, Charles, die."

"Can nature bear it? Will grace be given?—Needs human sin so dire a punishment? Father, say that I may escape to heaven, and yet pass by the other way. Yet there, in the very midst of all that chills my blood and wrings my heart, *here* alone do I see help, and waiting love."

"Die—die," the falling accents said. "Die," the ebbing life-tide murmured.

"Father, dear dying father, I will die. God help his lost one! Saviour, heed my misery—hear my cry, my vow, my prayer! Father, bear my vow to heaven. I will die—die horribly—but I will sin no more."

The pattering rain has ceased; the sighing wind shakes the casement, and then flies with welcome news o'er hill and forest dale,—through cloud and gleams of glory, to the wondering, waiting angels; and the spirit of the dead sire breathes its first praise on high, in language that still trembled in the chamber air—"Lost, but found—Dead, but now alive."

POSTSCRIPT.

But Charles did not die. Oh dear, anything but that. He only began to live—and he is living still; and Mr. Barton's place is more than filled; and this spendthrift of all life's sweetness, and of Heaven's great favours, is now so strong, so hearty, so joyous, so devout, so self-denying, that Mrs. Henry Wilton, who insisted on seeing the proof-sheets of this history, declares that not a creature will believe a word of it—not even herself.





